EAD THE BEST—STREET & SMITH'S MAGA

Western Story

Magazine
EVERY WEEK

AUG. 30 1930

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New Million Dollar Can Opening Machine

BRAND NEW INVENTION BRINGS FORTUNES TO AGENTS!

Here's Something Brand New! An Amazingly Simple Invention—Yet, Absolutely Revolutionary! For Now, At One Sweep, Millions of Old Style Can Openers Are Doomed to the Scrap Heap! Think Of It, Men! A Tremendous Now Opportunity For Quick Profits in Every Home in America! No Wonder Agents Have Made Astonishing, Almost Incredible Sums—Up To $100 In a Week. So Mail The Coupon For All The Facts And Full Details Of My Remarkable FREE TEST OFFER!

ABOUT once in a "blue moon" some genius pops up with a new invention that everyone has been waiting for. Then, presto! Almost like magic, agents' profits go soaring overnight to tremendous heights! And now the cold, hard-boiled facts about this amazing new can opener bear convincing proof!

More Than a Can Opener

This queer new device doesn't just cut a ragged hole around the edge of the can. It lifts the entire top completely out, clean as a whistle! The machine holds the can—opens it—flips up the lid so you can grab it—and gives you back the can without a drop spilled, without any jagged edges to hack your fingers—all in a couple of seconds! You just put the can in the machine—turn the handle—and almost instantly the job is done! Built to do the job better than anything ever devised! Will last a lifetime! It's far more than just a can opener, it's a real can-opening machine!

The Secret of Big Money

Women hate the old style can opener—and with good reason, too. It's the last relic of barbarism in the modern kitchen. Yet every day millions of women have to open cans the dangerous, laborious old-fashioned way. Food is spilled and wasted. Fingers are cut and torn—often followed by infections and blood poisoning that result in expensive doctor bills. Opening cans the old way is a job nasty enough to make most any man swear—this amazing new way—it's so easy a ten year old child can do it with perfect safety! No wonder women—and men, too—simply go wild over it!

Agents! FULL TIME—$265 in a week

"Here is my record for first 30 days with Speedo: —June 13, 60 Speedos; —June 20, 84 Speedos; —June 30, 192 Speedos; —July 6, 288 Speedos. Speedo brought me $265 in a week."
M. Ornoff, Va.

SPARE TIME $9 first half day

"The first afternoon I received my Speedo outfit I made $9."
Mrs. R. Spain, Kans.

PART TIME $20 in 3 hours

"I worked about three hours and took 25 orders. This brought me $20 profit."
O. C. Gregg, Wyo.

A Spectacular New Sales Plan

I want you to see this surprising new invention with your own eyes. I want you to know why everyone, man or woman, falls for it the instant they see it. Whether you are an experienced salesman, or never sold a penny's worth of anything in your life—I want to tell you about a remarkable new sales plan that wins you a profit on every call you make. This plan is made possible by another spectacular money maker in the Speedo line and offers you a steady income of up to $100 in a week!

Free Test—Act Quickly!

If you are ambitious, if your present income is less than $60 a week—act at once before some other live wire beats you to this lifetime opportunity. Without obligation, learn about these amazing new patented inventions and get my FREE TEST OFFER. Just mail the coupon today—NOW!

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Insert can in holder and turn crank. Top is cut out INSIDE the rim. Holds can for you. Juices can't spill.

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Yes, rush me your FREE TEST OFFER.

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Address .....

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☐ Check here if interested only in one for your home.

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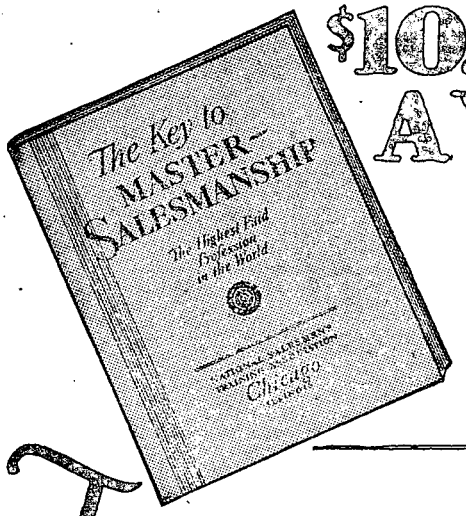
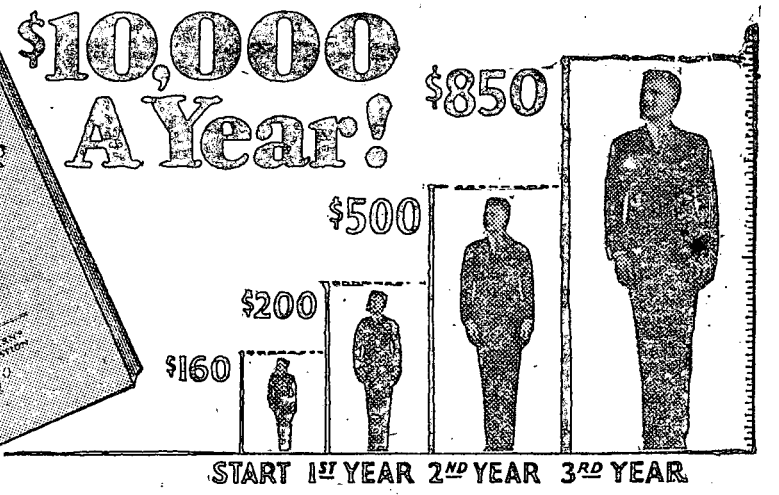
From $160 a Month to $10,000 A Year!





This Astonishing Book Showed Him How

How One Man Uncovered Hidden Possibilities He Never Suspected Within Himself and Raised His Yearly Income $8,080! An Illuminating Message of Vital Interest to Every Man Who Ever Aspires to Earn $10,000—$20,000—or More a Year. SEE FOR YOURSELF This Remarkable Volume That Has Led So Many Men Into the Five-Figure Salary Class!

Where Shall We Send Your Copy . . . . FREE?

TRUTH is stranger than fiction! And the true story that happened to R. B. Hansen proves it. His experience is not only intensely INTERESTING—but it will prove a revelation and positive inspiration to every ambitious man who reads this page.

Not long ago Hansen was working as a foreman in a rubber plant. His salary was $160 a month. That meant skimping and petty economies that are bound to irk ANY ambitious man. Naturally he was keenly dissatisfied—but like so many other men caught in blind-alley jobs, he didn't know how to get out!

And then one day something happened! A certain book fell into his hands. Between its covers he discovered a certain force that eventually led him to rewards beyond his fondest expectations. Inspired to action and with his feet firmly guided to the first rungs of the ladder to Success, Hansen went into business for himself. And within a short time he had boosted his earnings to $10,000 a year!

Salary Increases—200% to 900%!

A lucky accident? Not a bit of it! Hansen is not alone in his achievement of success after reading this remarkable book. OTHER men who have increased their salaries amazingly after reading these vital facts are numbered in the thousands! For example, C. W. Birmingham of Ohio read it and his salary raised from $15 a week to $7,500 a year. Wm. Shore of California made $3,000 his first 5 months. L. D. Mather's salary jumped from $35 a week to over $7,200 a year after reading the amazing facts in this book.

How did they do it? What did the book show them? Just this:—Every one of these men realized that Salesmanship offers BIGGER rewards and delivers them QUICKER than any other line of work under the sun. This vital book, "The Key to Master Salesmanship," introduced them to hundreds of surprising and little-known facts about the highest paid of all professions—SALESMANSHIP. It blasted dozens of old theories, explained the science of selling in simple terms and told them exactly how the great sales records of nationally-known star salesmen had been achieved. And not only that, it outlined a simple plan that will enable almost any man to master scientific salesmanship without spending years on the road—without losing a day or dollar from his present position.

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No matter what your opinion is now, "The Key to Master Salesmanship" will give you a new insight into this fascinating and highly paid profession.

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Dept. K-583 N. S. T. A. Bldg Chicago, Ill.

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Dept. K-583, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Illinois.

Without cost or obligation, send me your free book, "The Key to Master Salesmanship." Also include full details of your training and free employment service.

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Address .....

City ..... State .....

Age ..... Occupation .....

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What Will You Be Doing One Year From Today?

Three hundred and sixty-five days from now—what?

Will you still be struggling along in the same old job at the same old salary—worried about the future—never quite able to make both ends meet—standing still while other men go ahead?

One year from today will you still be putting off your start toward success—thrilled with ambition one moment and then cold the next—delaying, waiting, fiddling away the precious hours that will never come again?

Don't do it, man—don't do it. There is no greater tragedy in the world than that of a man who stays in the rut all his life, when with just a little effort he could bring large success within his grasp.

Make up your mind today that you're going to train yourself to do some one thing well. Choose the work you like best in the list below, mark an X beside it, mail the coupon to Scranton, and we will send you, without cost or obligation, the full story of what the I.C.S. can do for you.

Right now you can decide where you will be this time next year.

Common sense will tell you that it is far better to send in this Success Coupon today than to wait another precious year and then wish you had!

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☐ Traffic Management	☐ Spanish	☐ Stenography and Typing	☐ Cartooning
☐ Accounting and C.P.A. Coaching	☐ French	☐ Railway Mail Clerk	☐ Illustrating
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☐ Architectural Draftsman	☐ Telegraph Engineer	☐ Aviation Engines	☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Building Foreman	☐ Telephone Work	☐ Plumber and Steam Fitter	☐ Mining Engineer
☐ Concrete Builder	☐ Mechanical Engineer	☐ Plumbing Inspector	☐ Navigation ☐ Assayer
☐ Contractor and Builder	☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ Foreman Plumber	☐ Iron and Steel Worker
☐ Structural Draftsman	☐ Machine Shop Practice	☐ Heating and Ventilation	☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
☐ Structural Engineer	☐ Toolmaker ☐ Patternmaker	☐ Sheet-Metal Worker	☐ Cotton Manufacturing
☐ Electrical Engineer	☐ Civil Engineer	☐ Steam Engineer	☐ Woolen Manufacturing
☐ Electrical Contractor	☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Marine Engineer	☐ Agriculture ☐ Fruit Growing
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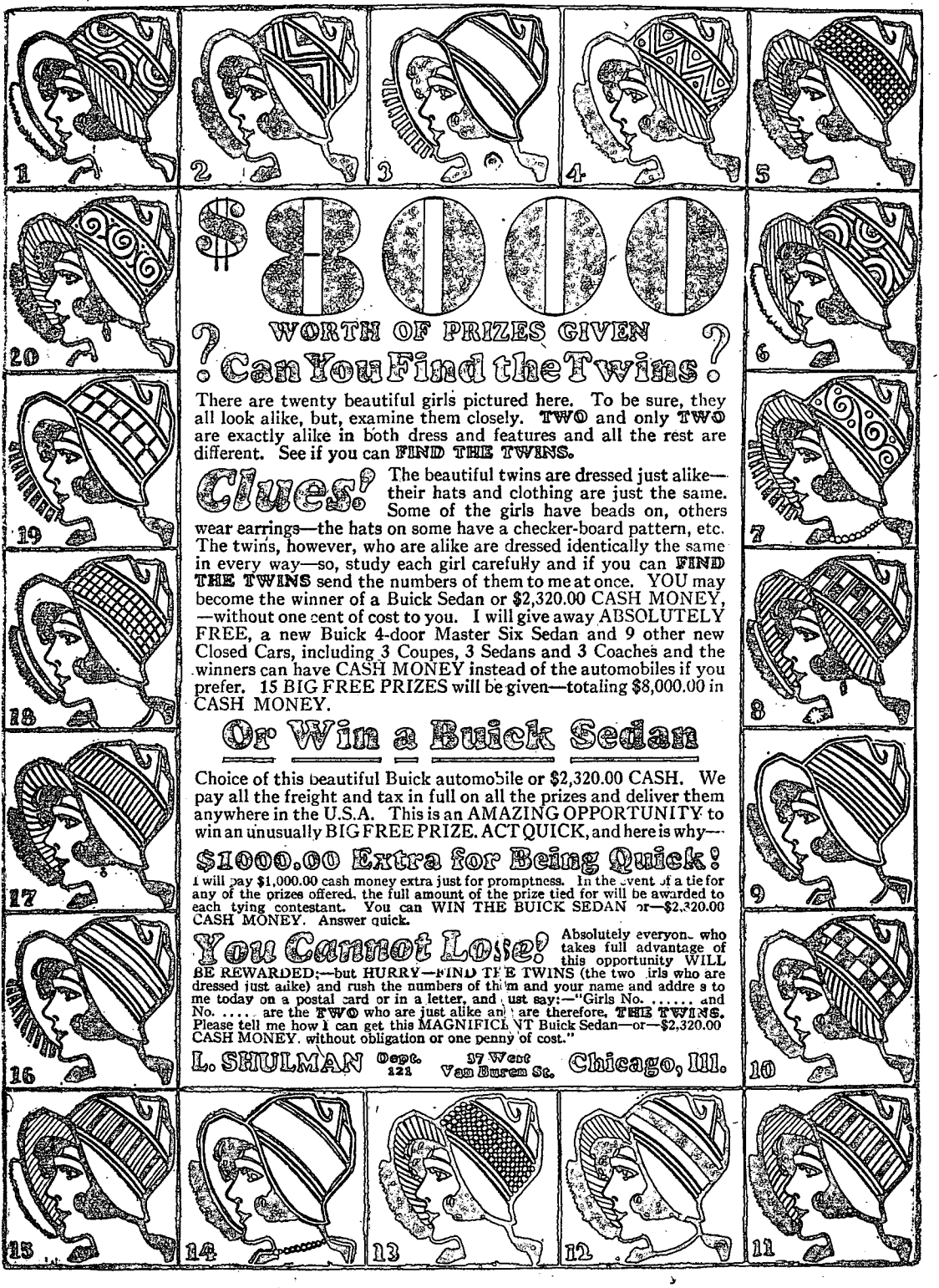

$8000

WORTH OF PRIZES GIVEN

? Can You Find the Twins ?

There are twenty beautiful girls pictured here. To be sure, they all look alike, but, examine them closely. **TWO** and only **TWO** are exactly alike in both dress and features and all the rest are different. See if you can **FIND THE TWINS.**

Clues? The beautiful twins are dressed just alike—their hats and clothing are just the same. Some of the girls have beads on, others wear earrings—the hats on some have a checker-board pattern, etc. The twins, however, who are alike are dressed identically the same in every way—so, study each girl carefully and if you can **FIND THE TWINS** send the numbers of them to me at once. YOU may become the winner of a Buick Sedan or $2,320.00 CASH MONEY, —without one cent of cost to you. I will give away ABSOLUTELY FREE, a new Buick 4-door Master Six Sedan and 9 other new Closed Cars, including 3 Coupes, 3 Sedans and 3 Coaches and the winners can have CASH MONEY instead of the automobiles if you prefer. 15 BIG FREE PRIZES will be given—totaling $8,000.00 in CASH MONEY.

Or Win a Buick Sedan

Choice of this beautiful Buick automobile or $2,320.00 CASH. We pay all the freight and tax in full on all the prizes and deliver them anywhere in the U.S.A. This is an AMAZING OPPORTUNITY to win an unusually BIG FREE PRIZE. ACT QUICK, and here is why—

$1000.00 Extra for Being Quick!

I will pay $1,000.00 cash money extra just for promptness. In the event of a tie for any of the prizes offered, the full amount of the prize tied for will be awarded to each tying contestant. You can WIN THE BUICK SEDAN or—$2,320.00 CASH MONEY. Answer quick.

You Cannot Lose! Absolutely everyone who takes full advantage of this opportunity WILL BE REWARDED;—but HURRY—FIND THE TWINS (the two girls who are dressed just alike) and rush the numbers of them and your name and address to me today on a postal card or in a letter, and just say:—"Girls No. ..... and No. ..... are the **TWO** who are just alike and are therefore, **THE TWINS.** Please tell me how I can get this MAGNIFICENT Buick Sedan—or—$2,320.00 CASH MONEY, without obligation or one penny of cost."

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Name.....

Present Position..... Address.....

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Rush my Watch, Knife and Chain. Will pay $3.75 and postage on arrival. Nothing more to pay and my money back if I am not delighted. I RISK NOTHING.

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It Was the Greatest Shock of My Life to Hear Her Play

—how had she found time to practice?

"WELL, Jim—I told you I had a surprise for you!"

She beamed at her husband, delighted to see how surprised he was.

And I was astonished, too. Quite casually she had gone to the piano, sat down—and played! Played beautifully—though I had never seen her touch a piano before. Neither of us could conceal our curiosity.

"How did you ever do it?" her husband asked. "When did you find time to practice?"

"And who is your teacher?" I added.

"Wait, wait!" she laughed. "One question at a time. I have no teacher, that is, no private teacher, and I do my practicing between dishes."

"No teacher?"

"No—I learned to play the piano an entirely *new* way—*without* a teacher. You see, all my life I wanted to play some musical instrument. I thought I'd never learn how to play, though—for I haven't much time to spare, and I thought it would take long hours of hard work. And I thought it would be expensive, too."

"Well, it *is* hard work, and it is expensive," I said. "Why, I have a sister....."

"I know," she laughed, "but *I* learned to play the piano through the new simplified method. Some time ago I saw an announcement of the U. S. School of Music. It told how a young man had learned to play the piano during his spare time without a teacher. I found that thousands of others had learned to play their favorite musical instruments this same easy way, and so I decided to enroll for a course in piano playing."

"But you didn't tell me anything about it," Jim said.

"Well, you see, that was my big surprise."

"If you planned to surprise me—you've certainly succeeded," said Jim.

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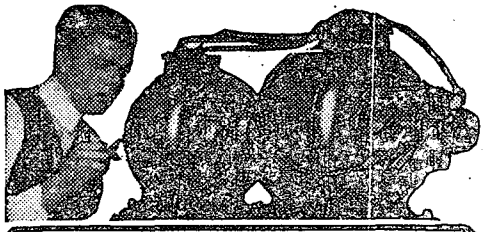

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SEND NO MONEY Just mail photo or snapshot (any size) and within a week you will receive your beautiful life-like enlargement size 16x20 in. guaranteed fadeless. Pay postman 98c plus postage or send $1.00 with order and we pay postage. **SPECIAL** With each enlargement we will send FREE a hand-tinted miniature **FREE OFFER** reproduction of photo sent. Take advantage *now* of this amazing offer -- send your photo today.

UNITED PORTRAIT COMPANY
900 W. Lake St., Dept. K-760, Chicago, Ill.

Feel 10 Years Younger In 6 Days!

SCIENCE now knows that the tiny prostate gland frequently causes lost health and strength, night rising, constipation, pains in the back, legs, feet, etc., in men past 40. Unless corrected this may lead to miserable old age and grave surgery. Now an amazing drugless treatment is giving swift, permanent relief to thousands. Used and endorsed by physicians, hospitals and sanitariums. Sent on trial. Feel 10 years younger in 7 days or pay nothing. Write for offer and free book of daring facts about men past 40.

W. J. KIRK, Pres., 7632 Morris Ave., Steubenville, O.

Picture Play

The Best Magazine of the Screen

Price, 25 cents per copy

ON SALE AT ALL NEWS STANDS

NO JOKE TO BE DEAF

—EVERY DEAF PERSON KNOWS THAT

George P. Way made himself hear, after being deaf for 25 years, with Artificial Ear Drums —his own invention. He wore them day and night. They stopped head noises and ringing ears. They are invisible and perfectly comfortable. No one sees them. Write for his true story, "How I Got Deaf and Made Myself Hear." Also booklet on Deafness. Address

Artificial Ear Drum

George P. Way, Inc., 768 Hofmann Building, Detroit, Michigan

CORRECT Your NOSE!

Improve your appearance with the Anita Nose Adjuster. Shapes flesh and cartilage—quickly, safely and painlessly, while you sleep. Results are lasting. Doctors praise it. 78,000 users. Write for 30-Day TRIAL OFFER and FREE BOOKLET.

ANITA INSTITUTE, 854 Anita Bldg., Newark, N. J.

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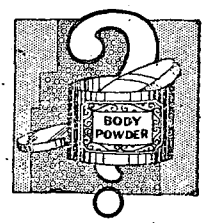
HELP THIS GIRL

NAME OUR NEW BODY POWDER

and WIN $1000.00 CASH!

THIS OFFER OPEN TO EVERYONE



Wouldn't you like to win $1,000 and a Free Trip to the Famous City of Hollywood, with all expenses paid? This is a rare opportunity that does not come more than once in a lifetime, and yet it is yours just now and without the slightest obligation on your part, for there is nothing to buy or sell to win this amazing prize. We want a name for a new body-dusting powder we are putting on the market, and you can win this cash prize of $1,000 by sending the name we choose as most suitable, and the Free Trip also if you are prompt.

ANY NAME MAY WIN

In choosing a name bear in mind this body powder is soothing and pleasant to use after the bath. It gives the body an alluring fragrance that makes you think of the fresh morning breeze from a Hollywood Rose Garden. You may send a coined word such as: Odorsweet, Fairytouch Rosekist, etc., or the name of a flower, tree, bird, or any name that comes to your mind, for any name may win.

FREE TRIP TO HOLLYWOOD

Can you think of anything more pleasant than a trip to the famous city of movie stars, with all expenses paid—to spend a whole delightful week, have a private car and chauffeur at your command, see the show places of Hollywood, Los Angeles, and ocean beaches—observe a picture in the making, and see the famous stars? This is your opportunity. Send a name at once be the winner, spend a glorious vacation at our expense. When it's over, return with our check for $1,000 in your pocket. If you are unable to come, we will send the $1,000.00 and give you the cost of the trip in cash. We hope you can come, and make this the greatest event of your life.

SIMPLE NAME WINS $1,100.00

Larry Donnelly, a small town barber in Pennsylvania, recently sent the name Acidoff, for our tooth-paste, and received $1,100.00 in cash. This was a simple name, yet it won the prize and brought Larry fame and fortune. You, too, have the same opportunity, as the very name you send may win you this splendid prize and glorious trip. Wouldn't it be delightful to win? Wouldn't it be a startling surprise to your friends to see your picture and the account of your success on the front page of your newspaper? Don't think you can't win for your opportunity is just as good as any one's if you will send in a name! Do it now! For the very name you send may win.

CONTEST RULES

This contest open to everyone except members of this firm, its employees and relatives. Each contestant may send only one name. Sending two or more names will cause all names submitted by that person to be thrown out. The prize will be awarded to the one sending the name we choose from among those submitted. Contest closes Dec. 20, 1930. Duplicate prizes given in case of ties. To win the promptness prize of a free trip to Hollywood, the winning name suggested must be mailed within three days after our announcement is read.

$1000.00 NAME COUPON

HOLLYWOOD MARVEL PRODUCTS CO.
1023 N. Sycamore Ave., Hollywood, Calif.
Dept. 103

Enclosed is my suggestion for a name.

Date this announcement was read.....

Date my suggestion is mailed.....

Name .....

Address .....

NOTE: Being prompt qualifies you for the free trip as outlined in this announcement.

LEARN AT HOME TO BE A RADIO EXPERT

Many $50 to $100 a week jobs opening in Radio industry every year. I'll show you how to make $200 to $1,000 in spare time servicing sets while you're learning. Home Laboratory Outfit makes learning easy, practical. Write for "Rich Rewards in Radio". It gives the facts on jobs opening regularly and how you can learn at home to be a Radio Expert. No obligation.

J. E. SMITH, Pres., Dept. O. H. D.
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

STEADY MONEY for YOU!

SHOWING THIS COMBINED LINE!

Establish yourself in a profitable business! Take orders for brand new line of TIES—SHIRTS—UNDERWEAR—HOSIERY. Splendid opportunity for sincere men to earn money full or spare time. No investment required. Master Sales Kit and complete equipment loaned to you ABSOLUTELY FREE. Write TODAY!

PUBLIC SERVICE MILLS
515-30th St., Dept. H-22, West New York, N. J.
Canadian Office—110 Dundas Street, London, Ont., Canada

TIES and SHIRTS — HOSE and UNDERWEAR

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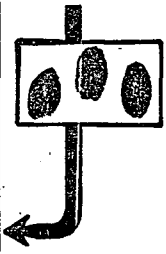
He Left His Calling Card

Written in Blood



Telltale Finger Prints

Three bloody finger prints on the cash register! He might as well have left his calling card—his doom was already written! Get this gripping story—FREE!—with twelve others just as exciting.

13 True Detective Stories

FREE! Gripping mysteries! Gruesome tragedies! Hair-raising climaxes! Every story a thrill! Think of it! Real Secret Service Operators give you "inside dope" on real crime cases. Write and learn how this school has taken men just like you and trained them for high official positions—thrills, big salaries and handsome rewards. WRITE TODAY—but no stories or literature will be sent to boys under 17 years of age.

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
Dept. C-277 1920 Sunnyside Ave. Chicago, Ill.

NEW ORANGE JUICE MACHINE

Ends Drudgery for Housewives!

Pays Handsome Commissions TO AGENTS

EVERYBODY drinks orange juice these days, but women hate the tedious task of squeezing, seeding and straining necessary with old-fashioned juicers. When you show them KWIKWAY—this clever new machine that makes preparing orange juice a pleasure—and the price so amazingly low, they are simply wild about it. Fills a long standing need. Practically sells itself and pays a generous commission on every sale. Write at once for full description of KWIKWAY and amazing big money offers to agents.

KWIKWAY PRODUCTS, INC., Dept. L-440, 1415 Pine St., St. Louis, Mo.

NEW KIND OF SHIRT

Banishes Collar Choke!

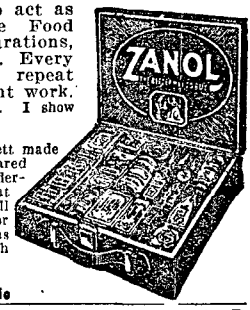
Clever discovery ends shirt grief forever! Shurfit answers shirt wearers' prayers for freedom from choking, binding, chafing, nervous disorders, slovenliness, etc. Magic patented celluloid tab and neckband give snug, trim fit at all times after repeated laundering.

Amazing Liberal Offer Brings Profits Up To $17 IN A DAY EASY!

Here's an opportunity to clean up all the BIG MONEY you want! Wide-open field. No competition. Every man a prospect. New, patented Shurfit features. Fine quality, wide choice of fabrics and colors and LOW INTRODUCTORY PRICES bring agents record profits up to $3 and $5 in an hour! Your own shirts without cost. Write for startling offer AT ONCE!

SHURFIT SHIRTS, INC.,
Dept. L-10, Arcade Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS: $2 AN HOUR



I want men and women to act as agents for ZANOL Pure Food Products, Toilet Preparations, Soaps, etc. 350 fast sellers. Every home a prospect. Steady repeat business. Dignified, pleasant work. No experience or capital required. I show you how.

$45 First 2 Days

That's Ducat's record. Mrs. Hackett made $33 in 7 hours. Van Allen cleared $125 in a week. This shows wonderful possibilities. Earnings start at once. Be your own boss—work full time or spare time. Ford Tudor Sedan offered FREE to producers as extra bonus—in addition to big cash profits. Write quick for details.

ALBERT MILLS
5938 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio

SONG WRITERS!

SUBSTANTIAL ADVANCE ROYALTIES are paid on work found acceptable for publication. Anyone wishing to write *either the words or music* for songs may submit work for free examination and advice. *Past experience unnecessary.* New demand created by "Talking Pictures" fully described in our free book. Write for it Today. NEWCOMER ASSOCIATES
722 Earle Building, New York

Health and strength restored with amazing quickness by a new organic, Glycero-Vita-Ironized compound called GLANT-OX. It is a triple tonic and acts almost instantly on all three systems that need help in cases of low vitality, lack of power, tired nerves, headache, nervousness, lack of strength, debilitated, weak and run down systems, poor blood, loss of appetite, etc. Help the blood and nerves gain health, strength and ambition. Send $1.00 for 7 days treatment. Satisfaction guaranteed or money back.

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Box 22, P. O. Station L, NEW YORK CITY

"TEAR-GAS" PEN

Looks like a fine fountain pen—sprays tear gas fifteen feet. Instant protection from holdups, hoodlums, vicious dogs, etc. Simple, safe and harmless—effect wears off in twenty minutes.

Agents—Something NEW!

Quick sales—Big Profits—Easily demonstrated—no heavy outfit to lug around. Be the first to write in from your territory. Send to-day for FREE particulars.

ATLAS TEAR GAS CO.
18 Ogden Park Station, Chicago

NEW LOW PRICES

ON GOOD YEAR, Firestone, FISK AND OTHER U.S. TIRES

Lowest Prices in History!

This big company, because of its immense buying power, will supply you with reconstructed standard make tires at these unheard of low prices—whole year's service guaranteed. Thousands of satisfied customers reorder year after year. **Dealers Wanted**

ORDER NOW - SAVE MONEY

BALLOON Tires Size	Rim	Tires	Tubes	Reg. CORD Tires Size	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40	21"	$2.30	$1.10	30x3	$2.20	$1.00
29x4.50	20"	2.40	1.15	30x3½	2.25	1.00
30x4.50	21"	2.45	1.20	31x4	2.95	1.15
28x4.75	19"	2.45	1.20	32x4	2.95	1.15
30x4.95	21"	2.90	1.35	33x4	2.95	1.15
28x5.25	18"	2.95	1.35	32x4½	3.20	1.45
30x5.25	20"	2.95	1.35	33x4½	3.20	1.45
31x5.25	21"	3.20	1.35	34x4½	3.45	1.45
30x5.77	20"	3.20	1.40	30x5	3.60	1.75
32x6.00	20"	3.20	1.40	33x5	3.60	1.75
33x6.00	21"	3.20	1.45	35x5	4.45	1.75
32x6.20	20"	3.65	1.75	All Other Sizes		

Send only $1.00 deposit with each tire ordered, balance C.O.D. If you send cash in full, deduct 5%. You are guaranteed a year's service or replacement at half price. **MIDLAND TIRE AND RUBBER COMPANY**
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Chelsea House

The Brand of CH Good Books

The Front-page Girl

By

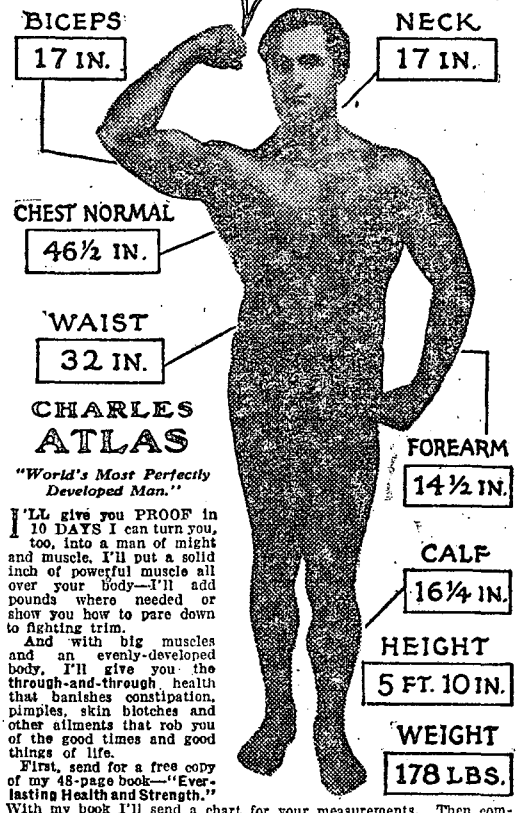
Jack Bechdolt

Now, the city room of a newspaper is about the last place in the world to look for romance. Newspapermen are notoriously hard-boiled, or at least they like to give the impression that they are. They would have you believe that they have seen so much of life that it no longer holds any mysteries for them. When a newspaperman comes in the door, love is popularly supposed to fly out of the window.

Nevertheless and notwithstanding, love did somehow manage to assume an all-important rôle in the particular newspaper which is featured in this unusual and fast-paced novel —love and its black shadow, jealousy. Here is a story that moves with the breath-taking rapidity of the news itself. It's the story of a girl, sick of the quiet of a little town, who comes to New York to plunge into the hurly-burly of metropolitan life at its very heart. How she makes good, and what happens in the making are told by Jack Bechdolt, himself an experienced newspaperman, in magnificently moving style. "The Front-page Girl" is a real headliner.

75c **75c**

"Give me your measure and I'll PROVE that you can have a body like mine"



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"World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

I'LL give you PROOF in 10 DAYS I can turn you, too, into a man of might and muscle. I'll put a solid inch of powerful muscle all over your body—I'll add pounds where needed or show you how to pare down to fighting trim.

And with big muscles and an evenly-developed body, I'll give you the **through-and-through** health that banishes constipation, pimples, skin blotches and other ailments that rob you of the good times and good things of life.

First, send for a free copy of my 48-page book—"Everlasting Health and Strength."

With my book I'll send a chart for your measurements. Then compare your biceps with mine. Do the same with chest, legs, arms, neck, wrist and the rest of your body. Then get proof of what **Dynamic-Tension** will do for YOU—in your own home—spending **15 minutes a day** doing what I tell you—without apparatus—without **special** foods, pills, or baths—without any fussy contrivances!

Remember, it's easy my way—**Dynamic-Tension** does the work. Find out what my secret will do for you—mail the coupon NOW for my Free book. CHARLES ATLAS (Dept. 388 A), 133 East 23rd St., New York City.

CHARLES ATLAS (Dept. 388 A)
133 East 23rd St., New York City.

I want proof Dynamic-Tension will give me, too, a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send your free book and the confidential chart for my measurements.

Name .....

Address .....

City and State .....

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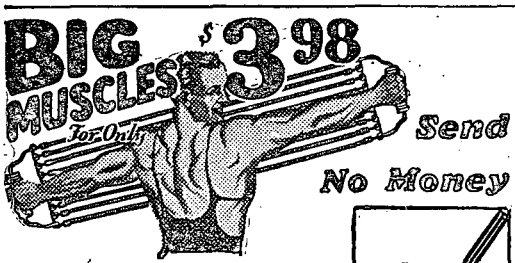

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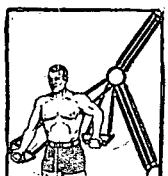

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BUT you save still more if you buy now. Everything's included in this special low price offer. Big, rugged 10 Cable Exerciser adjustable to 200 lbs. resistance. Complete Wall Exercising Parts for Back and Shoulder development. Hand Grip that builds husky Wrists and Forearms. Head Gear to bring out those dormant Neck Muscles. Foot Stirrup and Harness that develops sinewy Calf and Thigh Muscles. Regulation Heavy Skip Rope for Speed, Endurance and Wind. And a completely illustrated Course of Instruction. All This—For Only $3.98! Take advantage of this temporary low price offer NOW.

Just send your name and address. We'll ship everything out by return mail. Pay postman only $3.98 plus postal charges. Outside United States, Cash With Order.

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Play the Hawaiian Guitar like the Hawaiians!

Only 4 Motions used in playing this fascinating instrument. Our native Hawaiian instructors teach you to master them quickly. Pictures show how. Everything explained clearly.

Play in Half Hour
After you get the four easy motions you play harmonious chords with very little practice. No previous musical knowledge needed.

Easy Lessons
Even if you don't know one note from another, the 52 printed lessons and clear pictures make it easy to learn quickly. Pay as you play.

GIVEN —when you enroll a sweet toned HAWAIIAN GUITAR, Carrying Case and Playing Outfit—Value $18 to $20
No extras-everything included

WRITE AT ONCE for attractive offer and easy terms. You have everything to gain. A postcard will do. ACT!

TENOR BANJO and other courses. The same thorough instruction on Tenor Banjo, Violin, Tiple, Tenor Guitar, Ukulele, Banjo Ukulele. Well-known instructors. Write for full information.

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Approved as a Correspondence School Under the Laws of the State of New York —Member National Home Study Council

CHELSEA HOUSE

The Brand of *Good Books*

Auctioned Off

By

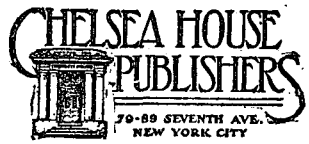
Vivian Grey

It begins with a foolish prank at a wild college party. Rosma Ainsley, beautiful, thoughtless, gay, is "auctioned off" to Illo Landon, wealthy man about town. Very soon, what started as nothing more than a gesture of folly becomes desperately serious. Rosma goes to Landon's apartment with a girl friend and another man. Landon makes love to her, but she escapes him. It seems as if she had lost forever the love of Bob Whitney and lost besides the respect of the community in which she lives.

Rosma goes to Landon and tells him that she will marry him, but he refuses, saying that he is not the marrying sort. She leaves him depressed, defeated. Things look black for the girl, and then of a sudden a situation develops which sweeps the reader along in its furious pace.

"Auctioned Off" is a love story very much in the tempo of the times, done with deep feeling and an eye for the dramatic which is characteristic of all its talented author's work. It belongs on your book shelf.

75c 75c



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A Baby In Your Home

I have an honest proven treatment for sterility due to functional weakness and general ailments of women which I have used with wonderful success in thousands of cases. It is the result of over thirty-five years' experience and has been praised in the highest terms by hundreds of married women, childless for years, who regained their health and then became happy mothers. I am reproducing herewith excerpts from a few of the many letters of gratitude I have received. Read what these ladies say and form your own opinion. The originals of these letters are in my files and I'll gladly furnish you correct names and addresses if you want them.

"I know you think I am the most ungrateful woman in the world for not writing you before this and letting you know how I am getting along after taking your wonderful Steriltone. It has worked wonders with me as my dreams will soon come true and I will be a mother next month. I have had such a wonderful time getting everything ready and there has not been very much room for anything else. I am under our doctor's care and he says he can't see why I should not have a very easy time as my health is in the best of order . . . Steriltone is wonderful for those who want a baby in their home. My husband and I can hardly wait for the time to come."—Mrs. Wm. E. T., Ill.

"I had full benefit of my first treatment. I now feel fine and am a mother. I have a fine little girl now 17 months old."—Mrs. J. L. M., Iowa.

"I was troubled with a very severe female weakness accompanied by some very unpleasant symptoms and with pains in my back, sides and legs. Since taking your wonderful Steriltone I am better in every way and the unpleasant symptoms have disappeared. Your medicine is wonderful for nervous, run-down women."—Mrs. I. W., Mich.

"Before I took your medicine I dragged around feeling so weak I could hardly move. I have tried many things but your medicine is the best thing I have ever tried and I think of you every time I look at my fine baby boy. He will be 6 months old the 10th of January, weighs 22 pounds. I wish you could see him; he seems to be so well and happy. My former Doctor told me I would never have another baby and then I saw your ad in a paper and wrote you."—Mrs. L. R. R., Ala.

"I don't know when I have felt as well or as stout as I have been for the past two months. Last month I never had a pain of any kind; did not know it was near my time until I came sick and I felt so good. I know your medicine has done wonders for me."
—Mrs. P. L. R., Okla.

"Just a few lines to let you hear from me. No doubt you thought that I did not intend to let you know about your famous STERILTONE. Well, Doctor, I wanted to wait to see results. Last month was the only time in all my life that I enjoyed a painless period. So now I am quite convinced that your Steriltone is all that you say it is."
—Mrs. E. H., Ga.

I Want 10,000 Married Women Who Will Accept a Treatment FREE

I want every woman who is sick, run-down, or who has been denied the blessing of motherhood on account of sterility due to functional weakness to know about this splendid treatment. If you will send me your name and address I'll gladly send you a treatment and a copy of my booklet, "A Baby in Your Home," which tells how to use it and many other things every married woman should know. Both will be sent free in plain wrapper. Just use the coupon or write me personally. All letters are held in strictest confidence. Don't put this off, as here may be the one means by which your outlook on life may be crowned with happiness.

Mail COUPON Now!

DR. H. WILL ELDERS
Suite 230-H, Schneider Bldg.
St. Joseph - - Missouri

Dr. H. WILL ELDERS, Suite 230-H
Schneider Bldg., St. Joseph, Mo.

Dear Doctor: Please send me your treatment and booklet in plain wrapper. Both are to be free.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... *State* .....

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We Did This Five Years Ago
We Have Been Doing It Ever Since

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(From the Boston Post, May 26, 1930)

WHAT PRICE BOOKS?

The proposed big cut in book prices is at least going to be a most interesting experiment. Four or five large publishing houses announce they will cut their prices radically. Many others, equally large, declare they will stand pat on the old prices. For a time at least, therefore, it is not to be a general price-cutting war.

The cut-price publishers will bring out new books at $1, as compared with $2 and $2.50 for the same type of books. The new price is to apply only to popular fiction; biographies, histories, et cetera, will remain unchanged.

In making this move, the cut-price publishers take the ground that mass production will reduce their costs and that the greater volume of sales will bring a reasonable profit.

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AND———

WE CUT THE PRICE OF PRODUCING BOOKS, SO THAT WE ARE ISSUING ATTRACTIVE NEW FICTION IN CLOTH BINDINGS TO SELL AT 75 CENTS A COPY.

AND———

THE BOOKS WE ARE PUBLISHING IN OUR LINE OF CHELSEA HOUSE NEW COPYRIGHTS AT 75 CENTS ARE JUST AS GOOD IN APPEARANCE AND CONTENTS AS OTHER POPULAR FICTION SOLD AT $1, $2, and $2.50 A VOLUME.

IF YOU DO NOT BELIEVE THIS, GO TO YOUR BOOKSELLER AND ASK HIM TO SHOW YOU THE

Chelsea House New Cloth-bound Books

OR, IF HE DOES NOT CARRY THEM IN STOCK, TURN TO THE OPPOSITE PAGE AND MAKE YOUR OWN SELECTION AND PLACE YOUR ORDER DIRECT WITH US.

CHELSEA HOUSE, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York

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Sweetheart Of Destiny.....*Carroll*
Auctioned Off.....*Grey*
The Dancer in the Shadow.....*Doner*
The Husband Hunter.....*Poynter*
Blondy's Boy Friend.....*Homesley*
Love Is Like That.....*Poynter*
Heartbreak Harbor.....*Carroll*
Swamp Flower.....*Grey*
The House Of Yesterday.....*Gaddis*
Fires Of Youth.....*Poynter*
The Key To Paradise.....*Gaddis*
Party Girl.....*Grey*
The Gingham Bride.....*Poynter*
Impulsive Youth.....*Grey*
The Front-page Girl.....*Bechdolt*
Her Wedding Ring.....*Montaigne*
The Miracle Marriage.....*Lambert*
Her Other Husband.....*Lee*
The Loves Of Janet.....*Edgelow*
Dancing Judith.....*Stanton & Hosken*
Angel Face.....*Grey*
The Girl at the Stage Door.....*Poynter*
Nice Girl.....*Grey*
The Road To Broadway *Hogue & Bechdolt*
His Studio Wife.....*Gordon*
The Bayou Shrine.....*Sheehan*
Quicksands.....*Thorne*
Marcia.....*O'Hagan*
The Love Bridge.....*Taylor*

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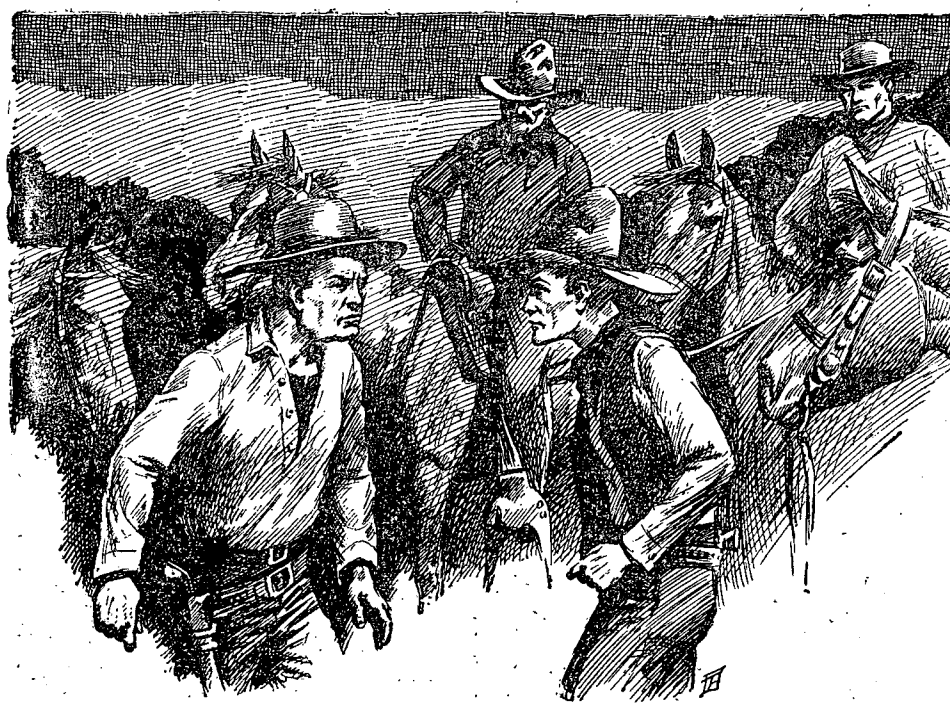

Rider of the Rain

By Robert J. Horton

Author of "Sheriff Justice," etc.

CHAPTER I.

OUT OF THE RAIN.

THE soft, sweet rain of the prairie spring was falling, obscuring the swinging stars, deepening the blackness of an inky night. A horse's hoofs padded dully in the soggy going. A dim light was the orange signal toward which this nocturnal rider was headed; water dripping from his hat brim, running off his black slicker. But his white teeth gleamed and his eyes flashed as he rode in out of the rain, under the orange light, into the livery.

He was laughing softly, still in the saddle, when the night barn man came shuffling along, blinking the sleep from his eyes, frowning at this interruption at three o'clock in the morning of his repose.

"You musta heard a funny joke somewhere," he rasped, suspecting an intoxicated cow-puncher. But he lost his taste for sarcasm when he gazed into the eyes that looked down upon him.

"The rain was singing and joking with me for fifty miles," said the new arrival, leaning from his saddle. "I always like to sing and joke with the rain—an' ride in it. What town is this?" The question came sharply, with a change in the eyes, a swift vanishing of the smile.

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The barn man was wide awake now, more respectful. "This is Cherry Run," he answered, peering up at the lean, dark face.

"That's not so bad," the rider mused. "Anything open in the way of eating or entertainment?"

"Yes, you can get both at the Klondike," the barn man replied politely.

The stranger dismounted with a single graceful swing. "How do you like my horse?" he asked, with his flashing smile.

The barn man looked the animal over, holding the lantern high. "He'll do till a better one comes along," he grunted admiringly.

"I've heard," drawled the newcomer, "that men who look after horses always take a certain pride in taking extra good care of a fine one."

"I guess that's so. If you're meaning will I take good care of this one, you can bet I will!"

"That's good," said the stranger pleasantly. "You'll feed him, an' water him, an' bed him properly; maybe he'd better have a light blanket now, an' a rub later on. I'll unsaddle him myself. What I've asked you to do calls for work, an' work calls for it's reward. Pass the word on to the day man."

He slipped a large, heavy coin into the barn man's hand, and the latter sensed the pleasant feel of a twenty-dollar gold piece.

"I'll do it up right, don't worry," he said enthusiastically.

The stranger unbridled and took the saddle off his mount.

"Stall 4 on the left," said the barn man, taking charge of the horse.

The newcomer removed a pack from the saddle. "Can you take care of this extra shirt an' socks?" he asked.

The barn man told him to put the pack on the bunk in the little front office. "I wish you plenty of luck!" he said.

The stranger whirled. His eyes darted lightning. "I make my own luck!" he shot back.

The barn man could think of nothing to say to this.

Klondike! Glistening glasses—a boisterous crowd at a gleaming bar—music and color gone mad in the whirling dance—a blue sky of smoke in which the yellow lamps shone like so many vagrant moons—marble faces above green-topped tables—purring wheels that spelled roulette—"seven-come-eleven" and the luring glint of gold—stacks of it; racks of it under a canopy of broad-brimmed hats—polished boots and spurs—and the conspicuous menace of heavy guns. Klondike!

The stranger looked upon it from the doorway with the racing light of adventure in his hazel eyes. To all intent, he was home! He called an attendant who was serving drinks at the table, and shed his dripping slicker.

"Where can I hang this?" he asked amiably.

"Hang it on one of those hooks over in the corner," the man replied disdainfully, and turned away.

The stranger caught him by the arm and whirled him around with such force that the tray he was carrying went clattering to the floor. "I want to hang it where it's alone," he said sternly, "an' I want a civil answer when I ask you something."

The man looked at the tray on the floor and then at the slim, trim figure of the man before him. "I'll give you an answer," he cried. His fist shot out into nothing, while a right hook behind the ear sent him reeling into a table.

The stranger, with the wet slicker on his left arm, moved on to the bar, down its length to where a red-faced, pudgy man was hurrying out of a small back room, evidently an office. This must be the proprietor, the newcomer decided. He paused at the extreme end of the bar as the man passed him, and

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watched while the man he had knocked down met the other and grasped him by the arm.

"That's him!" he cried in an enraged voice. "He knocked me down when I wasn't looking. I'm goin' to——"

The other caught him and held him. "Go on with your work," he commanded. "Do as I say! Them's orders. I'll attend to this. This is my place." He swept down on the stranger.

"Why did you knock my man down!" he demanded.

"Because he was fool enough to make a pass at me," replied the other smoothly. "Are you the boss here?"

"I'm Rafferty," said the puffy man wrathfully. "This is my place, and no man is goin' to come in here an' knock one of my men down an' get away with it. Who're you?"

"I'm Tonto," said the stranger in a purring voice. "Now, Rafferty, where can I hang this slicker so I'll be able to find it when I want it?"

Rafferty looked him over carefully, noting the cream moleskin riding breeches and the sharp contrast of the black holster against them. The man's black riding boots fairly shrieked their quality. The gray riding jacket, the blue tie held by a silver ring, and the big gray Stetson stamped this new arrival as out of the ordinary. For once Rafferty was nonplused. He didn't know if the eyes which were regarding him coolly were half smiling or deliberately challenging. He decided the latter was the case.

"You got to have a special place for your slicker?" he sneered. "Well, take it out back to the corrals!"

For answer, the stranger who had said his name was Tonto stepped nimbly behind the bar and hung the dripping garment on a hook near the door of the private office.

"That'll do. That'll do nicely, an' I expect to find it there when I want it!"

Rafferty gasped at this effrontery. Then he stepped quickly to take the garment down.

"Don't touch it!"

The stranger wasn't smiling now and Rafferty didn't like the look in his eyes at all. He hesitated, and then smiled with relief as a heavy voice broke in.

"Ain't you a little particular, stranger?"

Tonto turned to confront a huge figure of a man; red-faced, with mean eyes, and a crooked jaw. This formidable individual stood with his hands on his hips above two guns.

Tonto considered, eying the other from head to foot.

"Yes, I am," he confessed. "I have to be particular."

"I see," scowled the other. "You have to be particular. Well, we have to be particular, too, an' we don't favor any strangers busting into the place an' tryin' to tear it up. Where are you from?"

"From out of the rain, big boy, an' if you don't believe it, just feel gently of that damp slicker." Tonto snapped a match into flame and lighted a cigarette.

The other's hand darted out to knock the cigarette away. Then he grunted with pain. No one there had seen the draw, but Tonto's gun had knocked the big man's hand aside. Spectators crowded back. Rafferty moved hastily down behind the bar. The bully swore.

"Now listen, big boy," said Tonto, smiling slightly with his lips, but not with his eyes, "when you talk to me like that, look medium pleasant. I didn't come in here to be pushed aroun', an' I didn't come looking for trouble exactly; but if you want it, you can have it!"

The gun had slipped back like lightning into its holster.

"You crack a man on the wrist by a trick an' then expect him to draw with you, crippled?" roared the other.

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"But—you've got two guns," purred Tonto. "Draw with your left, an' I'll cross my left an' draw with you!"

The big man snarled an oath and his eyes narrowed. The crowd tensed. Such a draw would be a feat of no mean caliber. And still the big man hesitated. He did not like the look in Tonto's eyes, and he didn't like the way the smaller man held his left hand and stood turned just a little to the left.

"It's another trick, Bridges!" called Rafferty.

Tonto laughed softly in Bridges' face. That soft, purring laugh was the only sound in the room. And still Bridges hesitated, though he felt in his heart that he could beat this stranger to such a draw, or any kind of draw. And if he didn't draw, he would lose prestige. It would be dangerous for him to lose prestige. And then the hesitation ended.

"I'm goin' to let you get away with this, whoever you are. But you're not packin' all the tricks in this neck of the woods."

"But I've two winners so far," laughed Tonto.

Bridges turned to the bar with a snarl and began to talk in a low tone.

"Does that slicker hang there?" Tonto demanded of Rafferty.

"For the present," Rafferty scowled.

"An' don't forget the present is until I get ready to leave," Tonto warned.

He beckoned to the bartender. "Set 'em up for those who want 'em!" he ordered curtly, and spilled a handful of gold on the bar.

CHAPTER II.

THE DANCE.

TWO hundred glasses were raised. *"To Tonto!"* But Bridges and his companions did not drink.

"Give these gents lemonade, since they can't stand anything harder," Tonto ordered.

Then from the rear came a girl's clear voice: "To Tonto!"

The stranger whirled and saw the girl at the edge of the dance floor holding her glass high. He darted over to her, swinging his hat almost to the ground. Their glasses touched, and Tonto indicated a toast to the girl. The crowd cheered. It was a crowd which would cheer anybody who was prepared to spend money.

"Want to dance, little one?"

"Sure, that's what I'm here for—— An' who told you I was little?"

"A little bird," he returned, with that flashing smile. "Little birds know all the little ones."

"Smart!" she mocked, as he handed the glasses to a waiter. He motioned to the three-piece orchestra, and the dance was on. So interested were other couples that Tonto and his fair partner were alone on the floor.

Tonto, it was soon demonstrated, could dance; and so could the girl dance. Their eyes sparkled as they whirled about the floor, and the crowd cheered. None had seen such dancing; and there was excitement. The stranger had shown he had other accomplishments besides dancing. As they glimpsed the roses in the girl's cheeks, they suspected one of these might be love making.

"What's your name?" asked Tonto.

"Loretta," was the answer.

"Well, Loretta, you're plumb nice!"

"Just finding it out?" she taunted.

At this there was a cry of warning from the girls at the rear of the floor. The orchestra stopped playing. The cries of the crowd were hushed, and then swelled with a new meaning. The dancers stopped in the middle of the floor, and Tonto broke away as a youth came running toward him. He was dark-skinned, young, and his eyes were flashing queerly.

"Loretta!" he cried. "What is this?"

"Juan!" the girl screamed, running toward the youth.

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But the youth did not look at her. His eyes were darting fire at the smiling Tonto: "You thief!" His hand came out from within his vest. There was a flash of silver light as Tonto leaped aside. Then he laughed, with the knife sticking in his left arm.

"You'll have to aim better than that," he told the youth.

Then the crowd gasped as Tonto tossed the knife in the air and sent it spinning in silver circles with a shot. The knife clattered to the floor almost at the feet of the astounded youth. Tonto bounded toward him.

"You see, you fool? I save your life. Take the knife and go!"

"You hear?" cried Loretta. "You hear? This is just a dance. Now you go."

The youth kicked the knife aside. "You fool me?" he cried. Then he whirled and ran out the rear as the crowd laughed with Tonto.

The girls crowded about them, but Loretta quickly drew aside and through a pair of curtains.

"You come with me!" she cried excitedly.

"Sure! Anywhere you say, girlie."

"You mustn't make fun of this," she said in exasperation. "You are in great danger."

"That's right in my line," smiled Tonto, as she led him up a narrow flight of stairs behind the dance floor. It all had been done quickly, but Rafferty had seen.

He came charging up the stairs just as the girl pushed Tonto into a room and closed the door. She flung herself against it and motioned to Tonto to go behind a curtain. There was a rough pounding on the door.

"Who is it?" she called.

"It's me—Rafferty! You know who it is. I want that man out of there in two seconds or I'll——"

"What'll you do?" she challenged, flinging open the door.

"Don't put your foot inside this room or you'll get—this!"

Peeping from behind the curtain, Tonto saw a small, pearl-handled gun in her right hand, held with unerring aim at the man's heart.

Rafferty started back. "Turn that thing away! Those toys go off when you don't expect it." He continued to back. "You know I don't allow men in this room. You—I'm——"

But Loretta slammed the door and locked it.

"Why didn't you let him come in?" Tonto grinned. "I like him. He's aggressive. I hope he comes back with the bunch."

"He won't come back with the bunch," said the girl, tossing her head. "I don't care if he does know you're here. He knows what kind of a girl I am."

"You're a through ticket," said Tonto admiringly.

"You're foolish and silly, an' I'm sorry for you," she reproved; "an' you're a stranger. That's why I'm talking to you an' warning you of your danger. You must not stay here; you must go on. To-night you came very near being killed. Don't you realize that?"

"Of course I don't!" Tonto exclaimed. "Who was goin' to kill me?"

"Juan might have done it. He seldom misses. But he is a silly boy an' would be no match for you. But Bridges! He is different! The boy is young an' has not the experience. Bridges will get you, for I saw it in his eyes. He'll get you if he has to shoot you in the back!"

Tonto's laugh rippled agreeably upon her ears, but it made her impatient. "You don't believe me?" she cried angrily. "Then stay an' you will see."

"Why did you go to the trouble to tell me this?" Tonto asked severely.

"Maybe because of the dance," she flared.

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"Maybe you like me," he suggested. "You see I like you."

"I didn't bring you up here to talk about nothing. You can go now."

She opened the door, and instantly Bridges, Rafferty, and another man crowded into the doorway. They stopped when they looked into Tonto's guns—two of them now. They were thoroughly covered, and the blazing light in Tonto's eyes showed he was ready to shoot.

"Come on in!" he invited. But none moved. "Eavesdropping an' breaking into a woman's room," he said sternly. "I have a perfect right to shoot to protect her!"

"Well, don't shoot," said the genuinely frightened Rafferty. "I just don't—can't—allow a man in these rooms."

Tonto's soft, purring laughter rippled again. "You've allowed it to-night, because I was here at the young lady's invitation an' for no other purpose than to talk to her. You can get now, Rafferty—you're just a stick of taffy."

"They can all get out!" cried Loretta indignantly.

"No, you go out an' let me talk to Bridges a minute. What the other fellow does I don't care, so long as he doesn't get in front of my gun again. Go ahead, sister!"

With a confused look, Loretta followed his order, preceded by the other man of the trio.

"Bridges, come in!" Tonto commanded. "An' keep your hands scratching your chin—unless you want to scratch gravel!"

Bridges entered the room, glaring suspiciously.

Tonto closed the door and looked at the big man quizzically. "Bridges," he croned, "why do you want trouble with me?"

"You're too fresh, for one thing," snarled Bridges; "an' I just naturally don't like you, for another."

"Do you make trouble for people just because you don't like them?" Tonto asked coolly.

"I've been known to do it!" Bridges snapped out.

"Well—don't—do—it—with — me!" said Tonto in a different voice and with a different look in his eyes. Again, Bridges found himself under the spell of those eyes, for terrible eyes they were when Tonto wanted them to be.

"I suppose that's a threat," he sneered.

Tonto stepped close to him. "Not a threat, Bridges, but just good advice."

Bridges did not seem to be able to frame a suitable reply to this. His eyes snapped and he swore. Then his gaze narrowed and centered on Tonto again. "You called me in here—with the drop on me, of course—to make me think you're a great man an' a world beater," he sneered. "Well, you haven't done any such thing, so don't be feeding yourself candy."

Tonto sheathed his gun instantly and his manner underwent a startling change. "I called you in here because I came to this town to see you. That's why I didn't kill you at the bar!"

Bridges' jaw dropped and his eyes widened. "You—came here to see me?" he ejaculated.

"Exactly," Tonto snapped out. "See you on a matter of business. I've heard much about you, know you're a bully an' a killer, but you are out for the money."

Bridges' eyes flamed with anger, suspicion, and then with interest. "I'll overlook those first two things you said; but I'm not above makin' or takin' a dollar when I can get it."

"Good!" said Tonto. "Now you're showing sense. It's a question of your nerve. There's a country not far from here where there are many fat cattle. Understand?"

"Fat cattle in many countries," snorted Bridges, with a puzzled look.

"But maybe you're overlooking some-

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thing," said Tonto, lowering his voice. "Listen, Bridges, where there are fat cattle, there are—fat banks."

Bridges stared and then smiled. "An' where there are fat banks, there are fat pickin's," he said softly. His eyes actually glowed.

"I want to meet you somewhere else, but I couldn't risk any more trouble in here," said Tonto. "Some very secret place, Bridges—maybe not in town."

Bridges' eyes lighted. "Miller's Wells, two miles north, up the canyon. You can't miss the place. There's a basin with an old placer camp. When?"

"At dawn," smiled Tonto.

"I'll be there," Bridges promised, and went out. He was no sooner across the threshold than Loretta slipped in quickly, closed the door with her back to it, and confronted Tonto before he could leave the room.

As he went down the stairs, Bridges heard the ripple of Tonto's laugh, stopped short, then went on with a dark scowl.

CHAPTER III.

AT MILLER'S WELLS.

THE girl's dark eyes were flashing with suspicion. "What did you have to do with that Bridges?" she demanded.

Tonto's laugh died away. "Girlie, you sure do take some interest in me. I had to tell him where to get off at. I don't want any trouble in this town. I just want to see you an' talk to you."

"You know what this Bridges is?" she said softly. "He is a killer an' a thief. Oh, how I hate him! He—he killed one of my family, dear to me."

Tonto's expression changed like lightning to one of softness, with the luster of sympathy in his eyes. "No wonder you hate him—an' you don't want him to kill me because you like me? I can see that is so. Don't worry, girlie; he isn't going to kill me."

"But why did you bring him in here an' talk to him? He went out so different. Did you know him before?"

"No. Forget this talk Loretta, an' we'll go down an' get something to eat. There'll be no more dancing to-night—or this morning."

Again the girl's eyes flashed. "You won't tell me, see? You go all around my questions. I won't eat with you. Bridges is an outlaw, an' maybe you're an outlaw, too!"

Tonto stepped close to her. "Maybe I am; but if I am, I'm a good one. I go where I please, maybe, an' take what I want—so!" In a moment he had her in his arms and was kissing her red lips. Then he released her, opened the door, and fled.

Loretta stood still, staring at the door. Then she jerked it open and ran to the steps, her palms clenched, her breath coming fast, dark fire in her eyes. But she saw nothing of Tonto. Instead, the youth Juan slipped up to her.

"Don't worry," he whispered, nodding his head. "I will kill him."

The girl turned upon him like a tigress and struck him in the face. "You fool, fool—fool!" She ran into her room and slammed the door. There she sat down, white-faced, in a chair and laughed. All this within two hours! And she had thought it love at first sight when she had danced with this dashing adventurer. She brushed his kiss from her lips. And again she was Loretta, the dancing girl.

Downstairs, Tonto was laughing at the bar.

Dawn was blushing in the east. The plain was a rolling velvet green after the rain of the night before. The trees on the walls of the canyon glowed fresh and clean. A soft wind stirred the leaves. The sky was cloudless—a great, high arch of dark blue. Birds sang, rabbits scampered, a mother grouse purred to her young.

Tonto rode up the canyon on his black

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horse. He wore black chaps this morning. His eyes, too, were roving jets of black. He had selected dawn for his meeting with Bridges, for in an affair of this kind, daylight was best. Too many things can happen in the dark. As a matter of fact, the happenings of the early morning had been a lark on his part. The business at hand was not a lark. Tonto was alert; there was none of the braggadocio about him; none of the dashing daring of youth.

For Tonto had lied to Bridges! He had not come to that town to meet him. He had not known he was there. But now——

Tonto smiled grimly and kept an alert lookout as he rode up the sharp, rocky trail of the canyon. The distance to Miller's Wells was not long, but the trail was winding, steep and tortuous. The sun was well started on its climb up the eastern arch of sky when he came out upon a ridge and looked into the basin below.

It was a natural cup in the hills, with a small stream running through it. There were dilapidated cabins along this stream for in years past there had been placer mining here. No one was in sight, but Tonto saw a horse tethered behind one of the cabins and smiled—with his lips; but not with his eyes. Bridges had preceded him, as he had intended.

He rode rapidly down the last stretch of trail and up the stream. Bridges greeted him from the cabin behind which he had tied his horse.

"Been waiting an hour," he growled. "You said at dawn."

"I had to repair a cinch strap," Tonto explained. "You know I rode most of the night in the rain." He dismounted and tied his horse. They turned to the cabin door. Bridges stepped aside. "You first," smiled Tonto, pointing to the door.

"You're all-fired suspicious," said Bridges with an oath.

"Just polite," purred Tonto, entering with his hand on his gun.

The cabin was roomy and bore evidence of having recently been fitted out for occupancy. Undoubtedly, Bridges and his band used this place as an occasional rendezvous. Tonto sat down at the table across from Bridges, where he could watch the door.

Bridges leaned his elbows on the table and looked Tonto squarely in the eyes. The eyes were not laughing this morning, nor were they the hard, cold, menacing eyes he had looked into the time of their meeting at the bar; but they were steel-cold and just as steady as light.

"There's one thing I want to ask you," said Bridges, in a somewhat hesitant voice. "Last night—when you hit my wrist and offered to draw the gun on your right with your left hand—would you have done it?"

In a flash, Tonto kicked back his chair and leaped to his feet. His left hand swept swift as light across his gun belt, and Bridges' eyes literally popped as he looked into a black bore of a gun. Tonto's holster was empty!

"You see?" smiled Tonto. "I never bluff."

Bridges leaned back, amazed, satisfied, and chagrined. "You can handle your gun, Tonto—but you're not a killer."

Tonto's laugh lacked its ripple in that little cabin.

"Now, Bridges, let's get down to business. I suggested some such place as this for our talk because, for reasons of my own, an' because of what happened at that bar, I didn't want to take a chance of our being seen together. The proposition I have to offer requires a man of nerve—a man who can stand up in the face of blazing guns. Can you do that, Bridges?"

"I've stood up before gunfire in my time," scowled Bridges.

"Very well." Tonto's tone was stern,

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businesslike. "You know how to use a running iron, I suppose?"

Bridges rose in his chair but dropped back before the look in Tonto's eyes. "Why should I answer that when I'm not exactly sure just who you are?" he flared.

"Any man on the range can know how to use a running iron," replied Tonto calmly. "I can use one myself."

"An' so can I," Bridges conceded. This Tonto was too smart. He needed close watching. Bridges realized he was not sure of himself for the first time. It was a panicky feeling.

"Quite so," said Tonto, smiling. "If you come with me, you may have to use one." He leaned on the table, and surveyed the other quizzically. "Suppose it was night, Bridges—dead night. No moon, no stars. Men are in a bank, an' men are outside. There's an explosion in the bank, men come running in the street, guns are blazing, an' bullets whistling. Death is handy. Could you stand that, Bridges?"

Bridges stared. It was as if the man across the table were telling a story. His method of putting the matter up to another was uncanny. Bank robbery and the perilous get-away! Bridges was fascinated, even less sure of himself.

"Yes!" he answered boldly.

Tonto deftly rolled a cigarette, snapped a match into flame, lighted it—without ever once taking his eyes from Bridges'! "I have some men in the hills east of here," he said casually. "I need some more. You can come—if you can do as you say. You can bring two more—if they are right. It isn't an easy job, Bridges. The first may be the last for any of us. If you want to take the chance"—he shrugged and shook the ashes from his cigarette—"you can come. It isn't easy work, but it's easy money—if we win." He smiled in the face of Bridges' stare.

"I might take a chance if I was sure of you," Bridges grunted.

"You have my word," Tonto said evenly.

"But I have no proof of it!" Bridges snapped.

Tonto's eyes narrowed; they had almost the look that had stopped Bridges the night before. "Would I trust you this far if I had no reason to need your services?" he asked coldly. "I do not have to trust you, Bridges, because you do not trust me. But I have." He was on his feet in a wink, and his gun covered the other as he backed against the wall. "I have trusted you as my proof by coming here alone. Call your men to the front of the cabin or I'll kill you where you stand!"

Bridges' face went white. Involuntarily he raised his hands as he whistled three times. In a moment, half a dozen men were staring into the cabin.

"Is it the proof?" demanded Tonto in an icy voice.

Bridges nodded and shook his head at the men in the doorway, who drew back at once.

"Very good," said Tonto, and his laugh rippled again as he sheathed his gun and smiled at the bewildered man before him.

CHAPTER IV.

A SHERIFF COMPLAINS.

CHERRY RUN talked this day, after the spectacular performance of the early morning in the Klondike resort. While Tonto slept after the meeting with Bridges, and the sun swung across the zenith and began its drop into the west, the dashing stranger who had come in out of the rain and created such a furore as the town had not known in months was the sole topic of conversation. And the interest centered most in his display of gun work. His offer to draw with his left against Bridges, and his feat of spinning Juan's knife in

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the air and kicking it aloft with a bullet, won the unstinted admiration of every one in town, except a few conservatives. Rafferty glowed in being the target for universal attention, for it was to him that scores came for details. And details were not lacking. Reports and rumors became distorted to a point where it was hard to believe that Tonto was a human being. Meanwhile, neither he nor Bridges put in an appearance.

Most interested of all was Sheriff Crawford. At noon he called his chief deputy Hatton into conference in his private office.

"What have we got here?" he demanded. "There hasn't been any such show as this put on in this town since I can remember, if all I hear is true. Who is this fellow?"

"Don't expect me to answer that," returned Hatton, with a helpless gesture. "He calls himself Tonto, and when Bridges asked him where he came from he said, 'Out of the rain!' He arrived around three in the morning an' gave the liveryman a twenty-dollar gold piece to make sure his horse would be well taken care of."

"I know all that," said the sheriff impatiently. "I've seen his horse, an' there's nothing hereabouts to touch it. It wears no iron. An' he rode out early this morning to leave town, an' came back later saying he'd changed his mind an' would take on some sleep."

The sheriff shook his head doubtfully. "Don't look none too good to me. He left a pack with the liveryman an' all that's in it is a change of shirts an' socks, a spare pair of boots, an' such stuff. Same sort of pack as any man on the trail would be carrying. But——"

"He would expect his pack to be opened," Hatton pointed out. "An' he would see to it that it contained just the right things. Still, he certainly didn't know what was coming up in the Klondike before he got here. In fact didn't even know where the place was."

The sheriff swung in his chair and slapped his desk with an open palm.

"He started that trouble deliberately, an' you know it. He didn't have to grab that waiter an' start a fuss if he wasn't looking for trouble. An', according to all reports, he welcomed the chance to wade into Bridges with both feet—did everything he could to make him draw with him. Well, there's going to be no gun plays around this town. We've been getting along tolerably peaceful, an' we're going to keep getting along that way. I'm going to call him for that business."

"I know," said Hatton; "but you know Bridges. He's been the town bully all the winter he's been here. He just hit up with the wrong man this time, that's all. Can't say as I blame Tonto for, after all, it was Bridges who started the second affair."

"If I had a thing on Bridges, I'd bag him," scowled the sheriff. "He's got away with a lot, an' I haven't been able to hang a thing on him. He's sneaky an' cunning. You bet I'll call him into the office on this! An' that Rafferty isn't much better. An' because Rafferty has a big bunch of votes up his sleeve, he thinks he can run this office. Let him try it!" The official rose and paced the room.

"After all, sheriff, we haven't got a blessed thing on this stranger except that he protected himself an' spent a lot of money," said Hatton. "Even with the show he put on, we can afford a few strangers who spend the way he does."

"That's it!" exclaimed Crawford. "He spends too much! Men who punch cows for a living don't shower the bar with gold. Even a good gambler treats his money better than that. This fellow wanted to make a splurge to attract attention, that's about the size of it. I'll bet he never got that money straight.

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After I get a good look at him I'm going through every circular I've got an' see if I can find a picture that looks like him. He might be wanted!"

Hatton chuckled. "That's the way you feel about every stranger who comes to town, boss. You've looked 'em up until that bunch of circulars is threadbare. Of course, this fellow——"

"This fellow," Crawford interrupted sternly, "is different! He's no ordinary trail rider. From the way they tell me he dresses, he might be—it's just possible——" The sheriff thought for a space, and then shook his head. "It's just possible he might be a rancher, or a rancher's son, from some distance away, out to have a big time. But—I don't believe it."

"There's one thing, sheriff," said Hatton soberly. "This fellow is a long way from being dumb. He talks well, they say, an' everybody who has seen him says he has an air of being somebody."

"Oh, I'll go careful," said Crawford thoughtfully. "But if he's straight, he won't mind a question or two, put in the right way. An' here's another thing this bright day." He took up a letter from his desk.

"Tom Campbell again. A hundred head this time. I wonder does he think I'm going out there with a posse when he doesn't know how long the cattle have been missing nor anything but that they're gone? What's the Cattlemen's Association for?" demanded the irate official.

"They've probably been informed, an' the complaint filed," smiled Hatton. "We've done their work now for years, an' they expect us to keep on. We might just as well look right here in town as to send a bunch of men out in that country."

"You're dog-goned right! An' I'm going to tell Campbell that in a way he'll understand. There's another party who controls a bunch of votes; but I'm getting sick of being made the goat. I don't care a whoop if I'm elected to this confounded office again or not!"

"Don't worry, you will be," Hatton drawled. "Well, boss, are there any orders—which there are. Let me have 'em."

"I want to see this Tonto," said Crawford. "For reasons of my own, I want to see him here in the office. An' I want him as soon as I can get him. Bridges I can see anywhere—I know his looks too well! I can talk to him in the street. But I want Tonto here in the office where we can talk quietly an' I can study the man."

"You're the boss," said Hatton cheerily. He was young, this deputy. Liked his work and was enthusiastic about his chief. "I'll have him here when he gets up, which'll probably be late in the afternoon, if I have to rope an' hog tie him. So long."

He left Sheriff Crawford in a peculiar mood. For the first time in months, the sheriff was interested to the point of excitement in a stranger. He had heard what they were calling Tonto—"The Gun Ghost"—and it intrigued his imagination. He wished he had seen the exhibition of the early morning. Now he was looking forward with a thrill to seeing the man himself. He took up pen and paper and answered Tom Campbell's letter. He finished as follows:

> While you know, Tom, that I'm here to do my duty as sheriff of this county, and am ready and willing to do it at all times, I can't take a force of men out there on a wild-goose chase at the expense of the taxpayers. Posses cost money, and when I take one out, I have to have something in advance to work on. It seems to me that the cattlemen's outfit should look after this. I always thought that was what the association was for.

With this gentle dig, the sheriff closed his letter and sealed it with a twinkle in his eyes. He was not afraid of Tom Campbell, even if he did have the loudest voice in the county.

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Meanwhile, Deputy Hatton was mixing with the crowd, picking up such rumors as were floating around. They were many and weird. And there was nothing to support any of them!

In the early afternoon he dropped into the little white cabin—it could hardly be called more than that—where the dancing girl, Loretta Pearson, lived with her mother, whom she supported.

"I know what you've come for, an' I've got nothing to say, Sheriff Hatton," she greeted, with a toss of her auburn hair.

"You can say good afternoon, can't you—to the sheriff?" he bantered.

"I could say more than that, Hatton, but I won't," was the spirited reply.

"You don't seem to be in good humor this afternoon," the deputy observed, eying her keenly. It was not usual for Loretta to be in a mood like this, and he had heard of the dance when she and Tonto had thrilled the spectators crowded in the Klondike. He had heard a rumor or two linking her and Tonto. He wondered.

"I know what you want, Norman, and I have absolutely nothing to say," the girl protested, with a catch in her voice. "All I can say is that Juan got excited and threw the knife. He—the man who was dancing with me—threw the knife up in the air an' knocked it with a shot. He was just having a good time, I expect. I danced with him because—well, you know I'm supposed to dance with anybody, if I want to, but only if I want to."

"I reckon there's every reason for wanting to dance with this Tonto," said Hatton. "They tell me you two put on the best show ever seen in town." The girl had turned aside with a flush, and Hatton was curious. It was not like Loretta to get a "mash" on a stranger at first sight—or second, or third!

"There's something, Loretta, you really should tell me," he said. "No one wants to make any trouble for Tonto, but he wasn't the only one mixed up in this. I understand you went upstairs and——"

"I took him up there of my own accord!" Loretta flared indignantly. "He was a stranger, an' I'd liked his dancing. I wanted to warn him to be careful after the run-in with that Bridges—for I hate Bridges, for one thing, an' you know why. That's all."

"But—now please excuse my asking you questions, Loretta. We've known each other for years, an' you an' my wife have always been friends. I have to do this, for it's part of my job. Didn't Bridges an' the others follow you two upstairs to the balcony, an' wasn't there trouble there?"

Loretta was silent for some moments. "They followed us up there, an' he drove them back with his gun," she said in a low voice. "Now that's all, Norman—I won't talk any more." She rose and flounced into the kitchen, glad, for some reason she did not try to fathom, that she had protected the stranger by not mentioning his conference with Bridges in her room.

Deputy Hatton left, very much impressed. If Loretta had "fallen" for this fascinating stranger, then he—Tonto—had better be careful. There were those in town, and Hatton was one of them, who would shoot the man in his tracks without notice or compunction if he tried any tricks where Loretta Pearson was concerned. The deputy's face was rather grim as he headed for the hotel some time later.

The late afternoon sun was streaming in the street, touching the eddying dust spirals with gold. A soft wind stirred the wide leaves of the cottonwoods and carried away the thin streamers of cotton which the trees were shedding. The sweet scents of spring, of growing things and warm earth, were in the air. It was the fairest time of the year in that prairie country.

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Into this flood of sunshine and vernal beauty came Tonto, fresh from bath, and "breakfast," and barber; his boots glistening ebon, the black holster and gun belt polished until they gleamed; the ring that held his tie flashing silver.

Deputy Norman Hatton knew this was Tonto the moment he saw him. Tall, lithe, handsome, with clear-cut features and dark, roving eyes, graceful, with a dare-devil air, and a manner that was certainly not of the cow camps. Small wonder Loretta was interested! Here was a man born to attract women —and to impress men.

Deputy Hatton was irritated because he experienced a certain hesitancy in approaching him.

CHAPTER V.

SUSPICION.

ARE you Tonto?" asked Hatton pleasantly, as he accosted the resplendent figure.

Instantly the look in the stranger's eyes changed to a cold gray as he locked his gaze with that of Hatton. He surveyed the deputy coolly and in such a way that Hatton felt uncomfortable, experienced a disturbing sense of inferiority.

"Why do you ask?" The voice was modulated but hard.

"Because, if you're that man I have a message for you," was Hatton's tart reply. Somehow, the man's manner had a hint of condescending tolerance. Hatton was as good as any other man, he felt—and rightly. But this stranger's personality blazed forth in a way that was dazzling.

"I'm Tonto," said the man sharply.

"Fair enough," said Hatton. "I've rather a peculiar message." Again his voice was pleasantly amiable, almost friendly. "The sheriff wants to have a little talk with you. It's only a step across the street to his office. I don't suppose you'll mind obliging him."

In a flash, Tonto's smile broke forth. Hatton was amazed and immensely pleased. He felt now that he could like this man without much trouble.

"Official business, I suppose," he chuckled. "Does he intend to arrest me for anything? For this morning's incident, maybe?"

"I don't think so," Hatton told him. "It was a little unusual. Things are generally pretty quiet around here. I reckon he wants to have a chat with you about—well, maybe the weather." He grinned as the other nodded with a sparkle in his eyes.

"We'll go see him," said Tonto. "I always enjoy meeting sheriffs—especially strange ones."

Hatton considered this remark as they crossed the street, and decided that Tonto was bantering. But there might be a double meaning to what he had said—probably was. Anyway, the ease and nonchalance with which the man had accepted the invitation showed that he was possessed of unlimited confidence. They had, of course, attracted a great deal of attention, and the fact that Tonto was going to the sheriff's office in Hatton's custody—as was assumed—caused a flurry of excitement. In fact, a small crowd assembled outside the jail, which rapidly increased in number, to the discomfiture of the official.

Tonto entered the sheriff's office with the air of one who was familiar with it and in the habit of going there frequently. There was a mild curiosity in his eyes as he met those of Crawford.

"Hope it won't be necessary to use the steel cuffs, sheriff," he said pleasantly, his eyes flashing keenly for a moment as he glanced about.

Sheriff Crawford looked questioningly at Hatton.

"This is Tonto," the deputy said. Then he left at a signal from his superior.

"Sit down, Tonto," the sheriff in-

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vited, indicating a chair across the desk from his own. "I hear you are quite a distinguished visitor."

Tonto took the chair, moving it slightly so he could see the door. He removed his hat, displaying his sleek, black hair, and regarded the sheriff quizzically. It was as if he were determining the official's character and judging just how far he could go with him in the matter of skilled repartee.

"In what way?" he asked suddenly.

The sheriff moved some papers on his desk. The question was disconcerting, and for a few moments he was put to it for a reply. Then he looked steadily at Tonto.

"I'm always interested in any stranger who comes to this town," he said slowly. "Any stranger, understand? We don't get as many strangers in here as you might think. We get very few who shoot knives in the air, drawn down on a reputed gunman we happen to have here—through no effort of mine—an' do some of the other things you did in the Klondike this morning. Under the circumstances, I feel I have the right to ask something about you." He was choosing his words with great care, and studying the other intently.

"Is there any particular charge against me for anything?" Tonto asked quietly.

"No," the sheriff conceded. "But what has happened calls for a little investigating on my part. I won't have any shooting in this town, an' I won't have any gun play. It wasn't—according to what I've heard—any fault of yours that there wasn't both this morning."

"I won't pass the buck, sheriff," smiled Tonto, "but I believe I stopped a gun play this morning. Anyway"—the voice hardened—"I won't stand for any rough stuff. I'm here to have my fun an' pay my way, an' no man is going to knock a cigarette out of my mouth or say mean things to me."

"Meaning Bridges," nodded the sheriff. "He's tough. But I hear you stopped him an' then did a little fancy shooting on the dance floor."

"There are men who would have bored that kid for keeps when he threw the knife," drawled Tonto. "If it hadn't been for the girl, I might have done that very thing." Again his eyes were hard and steel-gray.

"All this," continued the sheriff carefully, "establishes you as a gunman, an' a dangerous one. I don't want dangerous gunmen in my territory without knowing something about them." His gaze, too, was hard, unflinching.

"I am not here posing as a gunman," was the cool reply. "An' I'm not dangerous unless some one gets too fresh—meaning I'm not here to get shot up, or bullied, or made a laughingstock."

The sheriff leaned back, his eyes narrowed slightly. Here was no rancher, no cow-puncher, probably no gambler. Here was a character both shrewd and sinister; here was confidence to a point where it almost merged with insolence.

"You refuse to answer my questions?" he snapped out.

"I have answered them so far as I'm able," replied Tonto with a frown.

"What is your right name?" asked the sheriff suddenly.

"Tonto," purred his visitor. "An' that's all of it!"

"Where are you from?" persisted the sheriff, who was not quite sure of his ground.

Tonto leaned forward a little. "I'm from a long way from here," he said slowly, his roving black eyes coming to a focus on those of the sheriff. "From so far away that it doesn't matter, nor concern any one here. But, so far as I know, there's no one looking for me in particular, unless it's you."

The sheriff was annoyed to the point of distraction. But if this was a hard case, he had dealt with hard cases before.

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"I suppose you know that I can arrest you for the business of this morning?" he suggested.

"I'm prepared to furnish bail," was the quick rejoinder.

The sheriff considered. "I'm not going to do it," he decided. "I could make a charge sufficient to hold you until I could look you up, I suppose. But I'm not going to do that, either." He took out a large, black cigar, bit off the end, and lighted it carefully. He regarded his queer visitor thoughtfully. "You can go," he said, with a wave toward the door.

"Thanks," said Tonto dryly, rising.

At the door he was stopped by a sharp command from Crawford. "I'm giving you forty-eight hours in town," said the sheriff.

"I may need more than that!" Tonto shot back, leaving the official with the memory of a soft, rippling laugh.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE SUSPICION.

As he came out of the jail office with a grim look in his eyes, Tonto encountered Deputy Hatton on the steps. Instantly his look changed to a broad smile.

"His nibs isn't in any too good humor this afternoon," he said, while Hatton surveyed him coolly.

"No?" said the latter. "He has his spells."

"No reason why he should take it out on me," said Tonto lightly. Then his tone changed and hardened. "He wanted to know a lot about me, an' I didn't see fit to tell him much. Listen, Deputy Hatton—you see, I know your name—I reckon you've got instructions to trail me. Why, I don't know, except maybe it's because I'm a stranger an' made a little play this morning. But don't get too close, see?"

"If I'm going to trail you, I'm going to keep you in sight, you can lay to that," Hatton snapped out irritably. He believed Tonto was guessing, but he was not sure.

"That's all right," said Tonto easily, "but don't hang out at my elbows."

"You seem pretty fresh to me," returned Hatton.

Tonto stepped close to him, his eyes snapping. "What I seem an' what I am is none of your confounded business," he said evenly. "I'm minding my business, an' I'm not meddling with any one else's—yours included. An' I'm not interested in his nibs' forty-eight-hour notice. Suppose you tell him that, an' get wise to yourself in the bargain, an' leave me alone?"

"Are you threatening me?" Hatton flared.

"I'm giving you some of the sweetest advice you ever got in your life," replied Tonto earnestly. "I hate to be bothered." With this, he left the deputy and sauntered slowly down the street.

Hatton did not follow him immediately. Instead, he went into the sheriff's office and found that official poring over a mass of "Wanted" circulars.

"Can't find a picture that looks anything like him a-tall," complained the sheriff; "an' can't find a description that comes anywhere near fitting him, so far." He seemed disappointed.

"You won't," declared Hatton. "If that fellow isn't on the level, you can bet he's too smart to have his mug on any circular, or his description either. He just 'called' me outside about following him, an' said he didn't give a whoop about your notice for him to leave town in forty-eight hours."

"I didn't tell him anything about you following him," frowned the sheriff. "He's too smart to be straight, that fellow! An' I was sore an' bluffing about that forty-eight-hour notice. As a matter of fact, Hatton, I can't chase him out of town very well without good reason."

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"I've got a hunch he'll give you the reason," Hatton observed.

"He's insolent an' impertinent," growled Crawford. "Wouldn't answer my questions an' made me mad in spite of myself by giving me the impression he was making fun of me." The sheriff swore softly.

"Best thing is to lay off of him an' let him have his own way," said Hatton. "If he's wrong, he'll show it sooner or later."

"But I do want you to keep an eye on him," said Crawford.

"I suspected as much, an' he guessed it. Told me to give him elbow room; that he didn't want to be bothered. Fresh as the spring weather! I'll watch him all right, an' if it comes to any trouble, I'll take no chances."

Tonto's visit to the sheriff's office, and his brief but apparently amiable conversation with Hatton on the jail steps, had been keenly observed by no less a person than Bridges himself. The big man had watched from behind the flimsy curtains of a rooming house across the way.

As Tonto walked jauntily down the street, Bridges' eyes narrowed. From the start he had been suspicious of Tonto. These suspicions had been temporarily allayed at the meeting in Miller's Wells that morning, but now they flamed forth again. Why should Tonto make the proposition he had made on such short notice? And why should he be visiting the sheriff's office, and then chatting with Hatton? Was he setting a trap for him, Bridges? Every indication pointed to it! And just how much did Tonto know? Bridges was possessed of a disposition that was naturally suspicious. If Tonto wasn't "right," he would find himself double crossed with a vengeance. Bridges decided to test him out, but, at the same time, he did not intend to lose a chance for some easy money. And no common cow-puncher or gambler would shower gold as Tonto had done in the early morning. There was where he had Bridges guessing and mightily interested.

Bridges went down to the Klondike Café for something to eat. And there he found Tonto, spick and span—elegant!—the cynosure of all eyes, talking to the admiring Rafferty—spending money, but drinking nothing himself.

Because of the altercation of the early morning, Bridges could not approach him to ask certain questions he had in mind. He merely nodded to Rafferty and went to the lunch counter for his ham and eggs and coffee. But he watched proceedings carefully by means of the small mirror behind the counter.

However, he did not have to take the initiative in getting in touch with Tonto. The latter was laughing with Rafferty at the bar when he seemed to catch sight of Bridges for the first time. He said something to Rafferty, who smiled and nodded, and then he turned away from the bar and walked over to the lunch counter.

"Have you been to headquarters yet?" he asked Bridges.

"No, but I notice you have, if it's the sheriff's office that you're meaning?" Bridges retorted with a scowl.

"I was sent for," said Tonto gayly. "His nibs wanted my pedigree, an' when he didn't get it he gave me forty-eight hours to blow—which makes it necessary to stay longer than that. I expect he'll be wanting to see you, for he's pretty much riled."

"Lot of good it'll do him," Bridges grunted.

"What he doesn't know won't hurt him any," said Tonto in an undertone. "I want to see you to-night. Drift up to my room in the hotel after dark. Twenty-seven is the number, but watch out for that deputy. He's supposed to be watching me."

With this, Tonto drew back to the bar, leaving Bridges more puzzled and

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suspicious than ever. Drift up to Tonto's room with a deputy trailing him? Bridges grinned. He had more brains than that. And the whole business was getting thicker and thicker. He could trust Rafferty, and he would have to have a confidential talk with him.

At this juncture Deputy Hatton came in, took up his station at the head of the bar, and ordered near-beer. "As near as you've got it," he told the servitor in the white coat.

"An' let me pay for it!" sang Tonto, with his soft, rippling laugh. "The deputy is my guest for the rest of my stay."

Hatton made no reply, but he put a coin on the bar to pay for his drink. However, if he was annoyed at this banter on the part of Tonto, he positively fumed half an hour later when he sauntered out after Tonto.

Following directions he had received, Tonto proceeded to the cabin occupied by Loretta Pearson and her mother. The twilight was gathering fast and there was a fading band of red over the western mountains. Hatton could hardly see Tonto at the door of the cabin and because he had to keep some distance away, could hear nothing of what was said when Loretta opened the door in response to Tonto's light knock.

"You have no right to come here," said the girl, flushing.

Tonto swept his hat low and his white teeth flashed in a smile.

"But I have to come!" he said. "I must see you, an' it doesn't look good for us to be seen talking down at that place. Besides, there is Juan to reckon with, an' I don't want any more foolishness like this morning. The deputy is watching me, Miss Loretta, an' we better go inside for a few minutes."

"I should think he would be watching you," said the girl, hesitating. "What do you want to see me about?"

"I'm going to ask you to do me a favor," was the reply. "Of course, you do not have to do it, but, somehow, I believe you will. You see, Miss Loretta, I feel that you are the only person in this town that I can trust. You were good enough to warn me last night, an' I thought—well, you know."

"Come in," the girl invited suddenly, impulsively. "If Norman Hatton finds you here——"

"He knows I'm here," Tonto interrupted, smiling. "But what can he do? He isn't your guardian—nor mine. He can do nothing!"

Loretta realized the truth of this simple statement. She turned up the lamp on the center table and introduced her mother, who came into the room at this moment. But Mrs. Pearson left at once, carrying pleasant memories of Tonto's bow, handclasp and smile. Whoever he was, he had manners.

"Sit down," said Loretta, and they sat on either side of the table, with the shaded lamp between them.

Tonto leaned on the table and looked closely at the girl.

"This morning," he said slowly, "you suspected me of being not quite right because I talked with Bridges in your room up there. It was necessary, Miss Loretta, an' there was nothing off-color in the business, so far as I was concerned. I can't tell you any more about myself than I can tell Hatton, or his chief. You've just got to trust me, that's all. I like you—an' I don't tell that to every girl I meet, either. I just thought maybe you would do me a favor, because I trust you. That's why I came here this evening."

Loretta looked into his eyes and saw that he was in deadly earnest. She knew already that she would do him this favor, whatever it was—provided it was within the bounds of reason. The thought caused her to flush again, and when the roses bloomed in her cheeks, she was more than beautiful.

"What is it you—want me—to do?" she faltered.

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For answer, he drew from an inside pocket an unaddressed envelope. He put it on the table before her. "In that envelope," he said slowly, "there is a letter addressed to a certain party in this town. I am going away to-morrow night. You must promise not to tell any one. If I am not back in three days, open this envelope an' deliver the letter inside—without telling any one. Will you do that, Miss Loretta?"

"But—I——" It was plain the girl was at a loss to know what to say. Here was a fascinating man of mystery and a mysterious errand. If everything were not all right, she would be a party to the transaction. "I don't know what to think," she said.

"Then let me think for you," he said quickly, deliberately putting a hand over hers. "There is nothing about this business that can embarrass you in any way. There is nothing unlawful about it. This is a matter in which I can confide in no one at present. I can't trust this to any one. If I am back in three days, I myself will open the letter an' let you read it. An' what is more, if I am not back in the three days, open the envelope, an' if you do not want to deliver the letter—*you don't have to!*"

He smiled that contagious, flashing smile. "That's how much I trust you," he said in his soft, musical voice.

The smile and the voice were irresistible. Loretta thrust the envelope into her blouse.

"I don't know why I'm promising to do this, but I will," she said, with a hasty look about.

"Oh, yes, you do," he said, rising. "You just think while I am gone. Remember, three days—I must be back by the evening of the third day."

He took her hand and brought it to his lips.

When he had gone, Loretta was beset with misgivings. She was nothing but a little fool! What was it all about, anyway? Maybe he was playing a joke on her! Wasn't there something superficial about his politeness and gallantry? Who was he, and what was he? Yes, she decided, she was a little fool; but she took the envelope.

It was dark when Tonto left the Pearson cabin. He went to the hotel and had a bite to eat. This time he was followed by two figures, for Juan, the dark-skinned youth, also was on the watch, with hatred shining in his eyes and a new knife within his shirt.

Bridges came in to eat while Tonto still was at table.

CHAPTER VII.

A MEETING.

THE hallway was dimly lighted by a hanging lamp near the head of the stairs. To add to the insufficiency of light, the lamp chimney was smoked. Tonto had started for his room, which was at the end of the hall in the rear. One could see the dim, orange light of the livery from his window.

A half hour had passed when a man crept up the stairs and stole silently down the hall. Light shone from underneath Tonto's door and a thin needle of yellow shot from the keyhole. There was no one in sight save the man in the hallway. The hotel, so far as the upstairs was concerned, was practically deserted.

The silent figure edged stealthily along the wall. Then suddenly a dark form came hurtling from behind. There was the dull sound of a blow, and the first figure went down, with the second upon it. The sound of the fall could hardly be heard downstairs, where there was much talking and rattling of dishes. In another moment the door of a vacant room had been opened noiselessly and the second figure speedily dragged the first inside and closed the door. The hallway was again deserted.

In a matter of moments, Tonto, the second figure, had gagged Hatton with

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a bandanna. It was then short work to bind the deputy's arms and legs and lift him upon the bed, where he regained consciousness speedily.

It was dark in the room, with only a faint light showing in the window. Hatton could see his assailant moving to the window. A form was outlined for a moment against the dim light, and then the curtain was drawn, leaving the room in utter darkness. He tried to cry out but the gagging had been done effectively. He felt he knew Tonto had done this thing, but never in the world would he be able to prove it.

Tonto took the key from the inside of the door, slipped out after making sure no one was in the hall, closed and locked the door from the outside. Deputy Hatton was a helpless prisoner.

"An' it's for his own good," Tonto muttered, as he stole down the hall.

He did not go directly to his room but passed down the rear stairway and out the rear door. He crossed at once to the livery and, as he expected, saw forms scurrying for the rear entrance. Bridges had had no intention of keeping the appointment in Tonto's room. Instead, his suspicions had led him to watch Tonto's window from the livery office.

Tonto ran lightly the length of the barn and overtook the two forms by the corrals.

"You don't have to run away, Bridges," he chuckled. "I've got our friend, the law, all trussed up an' locked in a room in the hotel. No danger of him getting out till morning. If you don't believe it, come up an' take a look at him."

But, to his own surprise, Bridges did believe it. He had seen Tonto go upstairs and had seen the deputy follow shortly afterward. But the curtain in Tonto's window was up and no one had been in there. Moreover, there was no sign of Hatton now, and he should be sneaking around somewhere to keep his eye on Tonto. What was more, the sheriff had spoken to him, Bridges, that night and had warned him. Therefore, it was fair to assume he had called Tonto in to warn him that afternoon.

Bridge's suspicions were beginning to subside.

"Now we can talk a moment without anybody slipping up on us," said Tonto in a satisfied tone. "We're sloping to-morrow night—at midnight."

"Yeah? With how many following?"

"None," Tonto said sharply. "I'll attend to that. You an' your crowd will leave first. I'll come later when I know everything is all right. We'll meet at Miller's Wells. You'd better light out one at a time. But there's still time to back out, Bridges, if you feel that way."

"Who said anything about backing out?" flared the other.

"Well, it's this way," drawled Tonto, taking out papers and tobacco. He could barely see to roll his cigarette in the starlight. When he had built his smoke, he held it in his mouth without lighting it. The flare of a match might be dangerous. "It's like this. You're suspicious of me, Bridges, an' you don't like me none too well. As for your suspicions, remember I'm going with you alone—just as I met you alone at dawn to-day. I don't care whether you like me or not. That feeling may be mutual. But I can use you, an' you can use money; so that settles that part of it. But there's just one thing more."

He leaned close to Bridges, and his eyes flashed fire.

"Don't try to double cross me," he warned. "You can't get away with it. I'm telling you that. This isn't kid's play. I'm telling you for the last time that there's still time to back out—if you're that kind."

"We'll be at the Wells at midnight to-morrow," growled Bridges. "An' with a deal like this on, this is no time to be talking of any double cross. Just watch out for that little thing yourself."

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Tonto laughed softly there in the starlight and grasped the other by the arm. "I'm the one who is taking the chances," he purred.

"An' I'm taking your word," Bridges reminded him.

From a partly opened door in the dim hall, a pair of keen, black eyes had watched the sinister performance when Tonto had felled Hatton and dragged him into the vacant room. It was Juan, who had been at his station from the time almost that Tonto had first entered the hotel. He had seen Tonto go to his room and light his lamp; had seen him steal back and into a room almost across from that in which he, Juan, had hidden—and then he had seen the rest.

As soon as Tonto had left by the rear door, Juan had begun his operations in gleeful excitement. He had tried the door of the room in which Hatton was confined and had found it locked. But, as is the case in most hotels in cow towns, keys were greatly similar—of the skeleton variety, in fact. He had gone from door to door of the vacant rooms and had extracted the keys. Then he had tried them, one by one, until he had found one that would open the lock in the door of Hatton's improvised prison.

Inside the room it was the work of moments for Juan to raise the window shade and turn to the figure on the bed. He untied the gag, holding a hand over Hatton's mouth and admonishing him to be silent. Then he drew his knife and cut the thongs that bound the deputy's arms, wrists, legs, and ankles.

Hatton sat up. "Good work, Juan," he whispered; for he had recognized the low voice of the youth in his ear.

He rubbed his wrists and ankles while Juan searched for his gun. The youth found it in a bureau drawer and restored it to its owner.

"It was Tonto," he whispered excitedly. "He has gone out the back." Then the youth glided out the door and Hatton rose to unlimber his muscles. In a few moments he followed Juan. He stole to Tonto's room, found it dark and the door unlocked. He looked inside to make sure it was unoccupied. Then he silently descended the rear stairway and slipped out the rear door.

The space between the livery and the hotel was clear. Hatton stood well in the shadows and considered. It might be that Tonto had taken the sheriff's advice and had left town. If such were the case, all well and good; for the sheriff would be satisfied. However, if Tonto intended to go, why should he go to the trouble of attacking him, the deputy, trussing him up, and locking him in a room? Hatton decided Tonto had wanted him out of the way for some reason. And the deputy had no desire to tell Sheriff Crawford how he had been outwitted. He flushed with anger at the thought of it. It did not improve his mood to suspect that Tonto was merely making sport of him. He was insolent enough to do it.

Hatton walked to the livery, and instantly drew back into the shadows again. In the dim light at the rear of the barn he had seen several figures outlined. He crept around the corner of the barn and hurried to the rear, where he could see the figures near the corral. He nearly cried out with surprise, for it was not difficult to make out the slim figure of Tonto and the burly form of Bridges. Supposed to be enemies, here were this pair in a conference! Hatton strained his ears in an effort to hear what was being said but could catch only the hum of voices. Then Tonto went into the barn, and the others made their way down behind the buildings toward the Klondike resort.

Hatton wanted to confront Tonto in the barn, but he thought better of it. It would be wiser not to let Tonto know that he had been seen in Bridges' company. The fact that this meeting had

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occurred made the whole business more mysterious and puzzling. But a great light broke over the deputy. Tonta had attacked him because he had planned this meeting! It was easy to understand that Juan had freed him because the youth was insanely jealous.

Hatton decided to report to the sheriff. He made his way in a roundabout manner to the street. He had to pass the hotel, and as he walked rapidly down the street Tonto came down the hotel steps. Both stopped in the light that shone from the windows.

Of the two, Tonto appeared less startled. He merely smiled and waved his cigarette. But the look in his eyes was keen and searching. Hatton upbraided himself mentally for having left the rope ends in the room. If Tonto inspected it, he would see the ropes had been cut, and he would probably be clever enough to suspect the knife-thrower of the early morning before.

"Where have you been?" Tonto asked pleasantly. "I've missed you." He smiled broadly.

Hatton was hot with anger in a moment. "You know where I've been!" he flashed. "An' if you were here on the level you wouldn't have to resort to such a trick."

"Oh, do you call it a trick?" said Tonto coolly. "I told you I didn't want to be rubbing elbows with you."

Hatton's anger flamed again. "I've got a hunch I'll be holding a key over you yet," he flared.

Tonto leaned toward him, his eyes flashing. "If you ever hold a key over me, it'll be because I'm dead! An' I expect to live quite a while—a long while, mister deputy. If you're not altogether dumb, you'll watch your step. Good night."

Without waiting for a reply he turned on his heel and walked jauntily down the street, with Hatton following him in a rage. Despite what had happened that night, Hatton could not see his way clear to molest Tonto. But the sense of being played with was maddening. He followed the dapper gunman to the Klondike and entered directly behind him.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CATTLE BARON.

THE entrance of Tonto into the resort caused a mild sensation, but he merely walked up to the bar, where a place was made for him immediately, and smilingly called for "something cold." But if his arrival caused a stir among the crowd it was nothing in comparison with the entrance of Hatton, which caused Bridges and the crowd about him to stare with bulging eyes.

"You heard what Tonto told us, Parsons," said Bridges, addressing a short, thin man at his right.

"I was listening, you can bet on that," replied Parsons.

"He said he had jacked Hatton an' trussed him up," growled Bridges. "Now he comes in, with Hatton following him! It looks like a double cross if I ever saw the signs of one."

"It looks like more'n that," grunted Parsons. "But it might be that Hatton got loose. He's slick in some ways."

"He's not too bright," snorted Bridges. "Tonto just plain lied. An' why?"

"You think maybe he's figuring on crossing us?" asked Parsons, his small, beady eyes glittering. "What would it get him to try it?"

"A hot pill," said Bridges grimly. "But I can't figure out how he's going to try it. He comes to us with a proposition he's going to be in on himself as deep as the rest of us. If I thought that fellow was the law——"

"I don't believe it," Parsons scoffed. "That fellow's no sheriff an' no deputy; an' no county would be handing him money to throw aroun' the way he does. I'll come clean, Bill, an' say he's got me

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guessing. But the only way we're going to find out anything much about him is to go into this thing with him."

"What I'm wondering," said Bridges with a heavy frown, "is just how much he knows about every little thing."

Tonto had taken no notice of them, as had been agreed. He drank his beer and walked over to a roulette wheel. In a few minutes half the spectators in the place were packed about the wheel. Rafferty, himself, was an interested onlooker.

Again the gold flowed; this time out upon the numbers, on the red and black, on the single and double 0—a steady stream of it, with the youthful gambler holding his own by winning half his bets, and they were healthy bets.

He played high and with such aggressiveness that he came near pushing the other players off the board. When he began to win, he won fast. He "pushed" his luck and rung up several repeats, leaving the entire amount on the number for a second bet. He never spoke or smiled. He was a model of the intensive, high-speed player, and the spectators speedily lost all doubt as to how he made his money and could spend so much.

But Hatton, who was watching the play, could not get rid of the conviction that Tonto was playing to make a definite impression. He knew what he was doing, and he wanted to convince every one there that his business was gambling. At least he had Rafferty gasping as he compiled the losses of the house.

Then Loretta came out for her first song. The moment he heard her voice, Tonto began stuffing gold, silver, and bills into his pockets. He strolled over to the bar and lolled against it, listening. Incidentally, he saw a dark face at a window across the room near the side of the dance floor. He watched the gleaming black eyes regarding the singing girl steadfastly. Then he walked slowly out the front entrance, reaching it well ahead of Hatton, who had been watching Loretta in fascination.

In a flash, he whirled around the corner into the black space between the buildings and crept down along the wall of the resort to where young Juan was staring breathlessly through the window. He caught the youth by the shoulders and whirled him around, tearing open his vest. Juan cried out as Tonto secured the knife.

"Listen," he said sternly in the boy's ears. "Don't carry any knife around me —understand? Forget the knife business, kid, an' we'll get along. If you don't forget it, you're going to walk straight into a slug of hot lead."

Juan ceased struggling. His eyes were snapping fire. "I carry the knife if I want," he hissed. "You are the big bluff."

"But there's no bluff about this, boy." The cold steel of the muzzle of Tonto's gun trailed across Juan's hands, and he jerked them away with a throaty cry.

"What was the idea of cutting that deputy loose to-night," Tonto demanded, with the gun pressing into the youth's stomach.

"I don't know——"

"Tell me!" came the sharp command.

"Maybe I can tell you better," came a voice from behind.

Tonto turned to confront Hatton. "Maybe you can," said Tonto; "but you don't have to. Juan, here, doesn't like me an' thought he was putting one over. But he isn't going to meddle in my affairs any more—not if he has any sense. An' you an' I are about through with our chats. If it's gun play you want, you're heading right straight for it."

"I won't say I'm looking for gun play, but I'm going to follow my orders," Hatton retorted. "An' it isn't such a brave thing to be sticking a gun in this boy's ribs."

"He might as well learn now as later to mind his own business," flashed

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Tonto, putting up his weapon. "An' that goes for you, too."

Before Hatton could reply, the side door near them opened and Loretta appeared in a flurry of white. She had heard Juan cry out and the sound of angry voices.

"What is the matter?" she asked, looking from one to the other.

Juan muttered inarticulately and fled into the shadows.

"Mr. Hatton an' I were telling each other some jokes," said Tonto with his silvery laugh.

"An' that's about the size of it," the deputy confirmed briefly. "It's nothing, Miss Loretta."

"But Juan," said the girl. "I thought I heard him cry out."

"You did," nodded Tonto. "I took his knife away from him for his own good. He's all right. I'll go inside with you."

In a moment he was at her side, and as she stepped back he went in quickly and shut the door in Hatton's face.

"It had to be done," he said, looking at Loretta gravely. "You can trust me for telling you the truth."

"But you must not hurt him," said the girl impatiently. "He is very young and foolish. He has promised me he won't throw a knife again." Her eyes were flashing.

"I reckon he'll keep his promise, since it was made to you," Tonto observed. "You can depend on it that I won't bother him again." The girl turned abruptly and went up the stairs.

Tonto sauntered over to the lower end of the bar where Rafferty was standing, with Bridges and his crowd near by. Tonto smiled pleasantly, displaying his white, even teeth. Rafferty was inclined to smile back.

Tonto took out tobacco and papers. "Rafferty," he said amiably, "you say you won't have any trouble in this place, isn't that so?"

"If there's one thing I don't wan't, it's trouble," said Rafferty, frowning with suspicion as to what Tonto might say next.

Tonto lighted his cigarette leisurely. "You know, I'm getting riled about this deputy sheriff that's following me aroun' trying to make a fool out of me," he said. The tone was cold and the speaker's eyes were hard as steel. "I've taken this thing so far as pretty much of a joke. But it passed the joke stage to-night. You'd better put a word in this Hatton's ear, or you're likely to see one of the sweetest an' swiftest bits of gun play in here you ever saw in your life—whether you like it or not!"

In the green, rolling hills northeast of Cherry Run were a number of large ranches. The grass was good here and there was ample water in the numberless small creeks fed by the mountain springs. The largest of these ranches was owned by Tom Campbell, who also controlled a big range in the hills. His cattle were fat and sleek, thoroughbreds all. Campbell was a large man of the domineering type, with an extraordinarily loud voice and no dull sense of his own importance. When he received the sheriff's letter, sent in reply to his own about the missing cattle, his dignity was injured and then flared into anger. Without delay, he buckled on his gun, left his office in the ranch house, and rode as swiftly as his horse could carry him to Cherry Run, where he arrived at noon.

The cattle baron's advent in town caused something of a furore. It was not often that Tom Campbell was in Cherry Run, although many of his men wintered there. Some years he was not seen except at the rodeo following the beef shipment. And this day it was apparent that the rancher was concerned about something.

He left his horse at the livery and proceeded directly to the office of Sheriff Crawford. The latter had heard of

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his coming as soon as he entered town and felt uneasy. But he greeted the stockman cordially as he stamped into his office with spurs jingling.

"Hello, Tom. You're not usually in at this time of the year and I'm mighty glad to see you."

Campbell sat down in a chair opposite the official and took off his big hat. Then he drew an envelope from his pocket and tossed it on the desk.

"Crawford, what kind of a letter is that?" he demanded in his strong voice that filled the little office and drifted out the window and into the main office as well.

Crawford was uneasy now. "Why!" he exclaimed. "That's my letter! What's wrong with it?"

"That last part of it is what's wrong. What business have you got telling me you can't go chasing aroun' the country looking for cattle thieves? What's this office for? An' that crack about it being up to the Cattlemen's Association to look after my business is an insult, an' you know it!"

"Well, it wasn't meant that way, Tom," said the sheriff calmly. "I'm here to chase cattle thieves, as you say, an' I'm ready to do it. But, just as I said in that letter, I've got to have something to work on. I can't take a bunch of men out blind."

"You haven't got so much to do that you couldn't take a deputy an' look aroun' a bit," said Campbell sternly. "We haven't had to have the association on the job in years, because things have been pretty quiet. Now that rustlers are working again, you throw that up to me."

Crawford was worried and showed it. After all, Tom Campbell was a big man and the most influential stockman in the county. He virtually held Crawford's job in his hand, and it was the best political job in the county. Still, he felt no little resentment.

"I thought that was what the association was formed for," he said. "In fact, the affairs of the association have always been kept apart from this office, an' the organization has always been more or less of a mystery to us, especially since its headquarters are in Laurie, in the east end of the county. We're willing to coöperate with the association in any way we can, an' if there's got to be a search of the county, hills an' all, as you seem to want, I think the organization should go into it with us fifty-fifty. That's flat." There was fire in the sheriff's eyes.

"I'm not here to be dictated to," said Campbell gruffly. "An' I don't want to be unreasonable; but I've lost two hundred head of good stock—fifty head within the last thirty days!"

"Has your outfit looked for 'em?" asked Crawford.

"My outfit can't spend all their time lookin' for missing cattle," was the angry retort. "We're mighty busy this time of the year. Anyway, I'm thinking it would do as much good to take a look right around this town. You've had some sly ones here all winter, an' my boys tell me they haven't been here all the time either."

"I know who you mean," said the sheriff angrily. He was thinking of Bridges and his crowd. But now he thought of Tonto. He sat up in his chair with a startled look. "Listen, Tom, a fellow just blew in here with plenty to spend. He's probably the fastest gunman ever in these parts. He's sassy an' mighty sure of himself. I'll describe him." This the sheriff proceeded to do without overlooking a single detail.

But Campbell shook his head. "Don't know him an' never heard of him," he said thoughtfully. "You say he's fast with his gun?"

"Fastest I know," nodded the sheriff.

The rancher rose at once. "I'm going to see him," he said in his booming voice.

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"What you going to see him for?" the sheriff asked curiously.

"I'm going to hire him!" Campbell shot back as he went out.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GET-AWAY.

NOW, Tom Campbell was a man who was accustomed to getting what he wanted. For years he had had to fight his way on a hostile range; he had made his fight and won; therefore, he could be permitted a certain amount of self-satisfaction, confidence, and a dictatorial nature. He had listened intently to Sheriff Crawford's description of Tonto and he believed he could use this man, but not in the ordinary capacity of cow-puncher. He had plenty of punchers. Although he had made no mention of the fact, he had considered with disdain the official's personal prejudices and suspicions. "A man's O. K. on my ranch till he slips." That was Tom Campbell's motto.

Meanwhile, he had left Crawford in the most uncertain frame of mind he had experienced since he had held office. Campbell going to hire Tonto? Why—what for? Then the sheriff started from his chair. As a gunman, of course! And send him out to find the rustlers! For some reason, Crawford felt relieved. He rose with a laugh and called to Norman Hatton, who had come in to report.

"You can lay off this Tonto," he said cheerfully.

"Because Campbell says so, I suppose," snapped out Hatton, who felt he had much to be peeved about.

"Because I say so," Crawford returned. "I don't know why I gave the order in the first place. An' Tom Campbell is out to hire him."

Hatton stared. "Who does Campbell want killed?" he asked with a sneer.

"Maybe he thinks he has an idea of putting it over on this office," Crawford observed with a grimace. "He was pretty sore to-day."

"He's always sore when we don't run after him like a bunch of dogs," Hatton complained. "I'm going to dinner."

"An' I'm going to do the same thing," growled the sheriff. "If Campbell comes back here this afternoon, I aim to be out, understand?"

"Well, I've faced the music before an' I reckon I can be the goat again," was Hatton's surly comment, while the sheriff glared at him.

Tonto, immaculate from his polished boots to the soft, wide-brimmed gray hat at a saucy angle on his head, sparkling of eye, gay of manner, stood on the hotel steps bathed in the warm sunshine of noonday as Tom Campbell strode across the street from the office of the sheriff, who was watching from a window of the jail.

The stockman stamped up the steps, stopped short, surveyed the young adventurer from head to foot, noted that his description tallied with that given him by the sheriff, and spoke ponderously.

"Are you the one they call Tonto—eh?"

"Some called me that," answered Tonto, recognizing Campbell's occupation at a glance and seemingly respecting it.

"Well, I'm Campbell," said the rancher shortly. "I'd like to have a talk with you."

"Campbell?" Tonto wrinkled his brows. "I don't know any Campbells."

"Well, you know one now," blustered the stockman. "I'm Tom Campbell from northeast of here. I've got a ranch up there as big as all Harry an' stuffed with cattle. I've been hearing things about you an' I'd like to have a little talk with you. Want to come inside a minute?"

"Always ready to accommodate anybody that talks decent," was Tonto's re-

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ply, as he tossed aside his partly smoked cigarette. He knew he was being watched by members of Bridges' crowd, knew they were suspicious of him, but it only caused him to smile.

The little sitting room off the lobby was deserted and they went in there, taking seats near the small center table.

Campbell was studying his man closely. He, himself, had already been subjected, unknowingly, to a searching scrutiny from Tonto. Tonto's manner to Campbell was entirely different from what it had been to the other men he had met since coming to town.

Campbell leaned his forearms on the table. His big hat was pushed back, his shirt collar was open at the throat, he was chewing an unlighted cigar.

"My friend Crawford, the sheriff, tells me you're tough," he said, shifting the cigar.

"Did he say where he got his information?" Tonto asked coolly.

The stockman grinned. "Nope, but I reckoned he guessed it from your behavior. Crawford doesn't have to have proof of anything."

"If he doesn't take that Hatton off my back, he'll be shy a deputy," said Tonto with a serious nod.

"I'll attend to that," frowned Campbell. "I've never had any use for the bunch you ran up against here, except the girl, an' she's jake."

"You seem to have picked up quite some information," Tonto observed.

"I hear what I want to hear," said Campbell importantly. "I came in because I reported some cattle stolen, an' Crawford wrote me a sassy note about telling it to the association. Then he told me about you."

For a moment Tonto's eyes had lighted; now they were mildly curious. "An' you thought you'd hunt me up an' ask me if I stole 'em," he said languidly.

"Not by a darn sight!" boomed Campbell. "What interested me was what I heard about the way you can use your gun hand. When old Crawford says you're a world beater, there must be something to it. It takes nerve an' confidence to call that danged pirate of a Bridges."

"Bridges gets excited," observed Tonto idly.

"An' the rest of 'em all get cold chills up their back, even when he isn't excited. What's more, I've got a well-formed suspicion he's got Crawford himself bluffed; an' I know he's got Rafferty under his thumb, an' with his bunch he's got this town buffaloed all ways from the jack."

"Bridges is all right if you know how to handle him," Tonto yawned.

"Well, if you know how to handle him, you can handle any of 'em!" Campbell declared. "An' that's why I wanted to talk to you. I don't care a hang where you come from or what your real name is, understand? A man's all right on my place till he slips, see? An' when he slips, I see that he keeps right on sliding."

"You got somebody out there you want handled?" Tonto inquired.

"Well, maybe I have an' maybe not," frowned Campbell. "But somebody's meddling with my cattle. I want to find out who it is, if I can, an' I've got just about as much faith in this sheriff's office as I'd have in that chinless clerk out there. I want a go-getter an' a gun fighter. I'm willing to pay good money an' a bonus. An' I'm offering you the job here an' now—an' no questions asked!"

There was a tense silence for a few moments; then Tonto's tantalizing laugh rippled in the little room. "How do you think your other men would like that?" he asked.

"My men do as they're told, an' what they don't know won't hurt 'em," replied the rancher with a scowl. He did not like that laugh. "Joe Flood, my foreman, is the only man that has to know. So far as the others are con-

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cerned, you're visiting me, understand? But you can call the whole outfit into action if you need 'em. I'll fix that. I think you're the goods an' can help me, or I wouldn't take the trouble to talk to you."

"So you want to hire my gun," said Tonto, as if to himself.

"I'm not just hiring your gun. I'm hiring your brains, too. You've got 'em, or you wouldn't be pulling the stuff you have. I'm banking you can do more just by yourself, given a free hand, than a sheriff's posse or that dog-goned association. I don't know anything about that outfit, except that they see to it that I pay my dues, an' that's like throwing money in the creek."

"You've got quite a lot of influence around here, I take it," Tonto remarked.

"You said something then, stranger," boasted Campbell.

"Well, if we're going to make any kind of a deal," Tonto drawled, "you'd better pass the word to that trick sheriff to lay off me. He's had that deputy following me aroun' an' I'm tired of it. A joke only lasts so long with me."

Campbell saw the glint in Tonto's eyes and nodded. "I'll do that little thing," he agreed. "Now, how about the other?"

"I'll have to think it over. See you after dinner. But I'm not promising anything."

From the hotel Tonto sauntered down to the Klondike resort, where he found Rafferty figuring up the receipts of the previous night. Rafferty nodded in friendly fashion and signaled to the bartender.

"Not for me," said Tonto. "I've just had breakfast. Pass the word to Bridges that they can get started any time now."

Rafferty appeared puzzled and was about to speak, when Tonto interrupted him with a wave of the hand. "Don't look funny," he said; "just pass 'em the word they can start any time—you know what I mean." He spoke sharply and Rafferty lowered his gaze.

Tonto idled at the wheel for a time and then again went up the street. When he reached the hotel he saw Campbell coming from the sheriff's office. The stockman's directions to Hatton had been very terse and to the point.

"Suits me," the deputy had said casually; "but don't think you're hiring a cowhand."

Campbell motioned to Tonto to follow him and led him into the sitting room off the lobby. "They won't bother you over there any more," he said crisply. "Now what's the verdict?"

"I've got to know more about this business," Tonto evaded, "but I suppose we can talk it over at the ranch. When are you going out?"

"I dunno," replied Campbell shortly. "Now that I'm in here, there's some business I might as well attend to. I'll write a note to my foreman, Joe Flood, an' you can drift on out any time. Just follow the road till you get to where there's a branch road leading north. That'll take you straight to the ranch. You can't miss it."

Tonto nodded gravely. "Scribble the note," he said.

Campbell proceeded to write on the back of an envelope and then handed it to Tonto. Apparently he took it for granted that Tonto had accepted the unusual post offered him. "Just give that to Joe an' he'll take care of you." With this Campbell rose and left Tonto scrutinizing the note. After he had gone, Tonto folded the note carefully and stowed it in the sweatband of his hat. The queer smile he often affected was on his lips.

Already, men were leaving town stealthily. Tonto went up to his room for a few things he had there. Next he went to the barn and supervised the saddling of his horse. He rode boldly into the street and struck up a stiff trot

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eastward, leaving a golden floating veil of dust.

Rafferty watched him go from a window of his resort. And Loretta witnessed his departure from the little porch of her cabin on the hill. When he had passed from view she made a signal. In a short time the dark-skinned youth, Juan, was climbing the slope to the cabin.

CHAPTER X.

A MATTER OF COLOR.

ON this occasion, Tonto, the magnificent, became Tonto, the trailer. He sped out of town through the grove of cottonwoods and at the farther side drew up suddenly and turned into the trees. There he waited for some little time, his eyes and ears alert for sight or sound of pursuit. Then he swept on at terrific pace until he reached a small stream flowing south from the mountains. Tonto now displayed an amazing knowledge of the district. He swerved from the road into the gravelly bed of the little stream, rode some distance, and emerged from the trees and willows upon a dim trail leading northeast in the direction of Miller's Wells. But Tonto did not go direct to the rendezvous. He proceeded straight north, mounting several low ridges, and finally brought up on the crest of a high ridge from which point of vantage he could see for a long distance up a narrow valley that ended in a canyon. At the upper end he saw a number of dark specks, mere dots; but those dots were grazing cattle.

"They haven't moved 'em," he said aloud in a satisfied tone.

Next he rode back down the ridge, changed his direction to southwest, and trotted along a trail that wound through ravines, over ridges, and finally climbed the east ridge above Miller's Wells.

Tonto scanned the basin for sign of life but saw none. The sun was now slipping behind the western mountains, and Tonto slowly began the descent into the basin. He rode through the trees that covered the east slope until he reached the edge of the timber. Here he dismounted and tied his horse. In the gathering twilight the shacks in the center of the basin looked like ghostly shadows. Still there was no sign of life.

"Playing mighty safe," Tonto muttered. "Leaving the first move up to me." Then an alarming doubt assailed him. He believed that Bridges and his men were keeping out of sight in the timber near the south trail. He knew suspicion still lingered in Bridges' mind. But it might be that Bridges had decided not to take a chance and had not come to the rendezvous at all.

Tonto waited until the basin was shrouded in the last deep purple of the twilight. A single star was glimmering high in the sky when he walked out of the timber and strode briskly across to the shacks. He found them deserted, sat down on the stoop of the one in which he had held the conference with Bridges, rolled and lighted a cigarette, and waited.

He had not long to wait. As night closed over the twilight, dark shadows flitted from the clumps of trees, and shortly several men were at the cabin.

"All right, let's go in." It was Bridges who spoke.

"We act like we were all scared," said Tonto in an irritated voice. "I've been waiting here an hour."

"It took you long enough to get here," said Bridges as he lighted two candles.

"I watched my back trail mighty hard," Tonto returned sharply. "An' I didn't come on an air line. I have to be more careful than you fellows, what with the law watching my every move."

"Yeah? Well, you rode out of town plain enough." Bridges' tone was aggressive.

In the flickering yellow light of the candles, Tonto looked from Bridges to his aid, Parsons. Their gaze was keen

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and unwavering. Tonto saw something more than suspicion in their eyes. His own narrowed.

"If we're going to have any argument we might as well have it over with right now," he said in a hard voice. "Have you got any objection to the way I rode out of town, Bridges? Wasn't it better to ride straight out than to sneak aroun'?"

"Sit down!" Bridges commanded. "The rest of you get out. Parsons an' me can attend to this."

When the trio was alone, sitting at the table with the candles burning between them, Tonto was the first to speak.

"What's on your mind, Bridges?" he asked, in a voice that was soft as silk.

"You'll hear quick enough. You've been acting mighty queer, Tonto—an' queer's no name for it. The beauty of it is that so far as we're concerned, you haven't got a thing on us—not a thing."

"I've got so much on you that I saw fit to invite you in on a proposition," Tonto retorted boldly.

"That's what you say." Bridges sneered openly, and Tonto's sharp eyes flashed.

"If you're going to be onery about this, we'll call it off," said Tonto angrily.

"It's too late to call it off, if you have so much on us," said Bridges grimly. "An' don't make any false moves, Mister Tonto, for you're covered from three angles."

Bridges' face darkened as Tonto's laugh rippled the small room.

"What do I care for guns," said Tonto. "Come on, Bridges, tell me what's on your mind."

"You've been hobnobbing pretty regularly with the sheriff, an' I think that stunt of Hatton following you was a bluff," said Bridges sternly. "You told us last night you had him tied up in the room in the hotel, an' a few minutes later he walks into the Klondike."

"More than one have been following me," said Tonto. "That kid, Juan, is one. He followed me an' Hatton to the hotel an' he cut Hatton loose after I left. He admitted it last night an' I took his knife away from him."

"Might be—we'll let it pass. How about the talks with Tom Campbell to-day? You two seem to be on good terms."

Tonto laughed again. "I never saw him before to-day. He got an earful from his nibs, the sheriff, an' offered me a job! Wants a gunman on the place an'——"

"You're a liar!"

Tonto's eyes narrowed to slits through which shot a greenish fire.

"Bridges, you're getting away with a thousand times more than you think," he said in icy tones; "but you'll listen to me or I'll shoot it out with the two of you!"

There was a short space of silence—a silence that seemed to weigh down upon the room as if it were material. Then said Tonto:

"If you attempt to signal or to draw, I'll drop you in your tracks, even if I get a hundred bullets in my back the next second!"

Another interval of silence, during which Tonto's gaze flamed on Bridges and Parsons, both of whom looked him steadily in the eye. Then he spoke again.

"I'm going to take off my hat with my left hand, Bridges, an' put it on the table. Feel under the sweatband an' you'll find a note scribbled on the back of an envelope. That note is to Campbell's foreman to put me up as a new hand an' wait for orders. Read it an' put it back. It might come in handy some time."

Tonto carefully removed his hat and put it on the table. Bridges took it up roughly, ran his fingers under the sweatband, and took out the note. He read it, looked at the address on the reverse

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side, and handed it to Parsons. Parsons read it and tossed it on the table.

"That don't mean anything," he said gruffly.

"Of course it don't." Bridges looked at Tonto. "How do I know that's on the level? How——"

"Because I say so!" Tonto broke in. "You can like it or lump it as you want!"

Tonto saw what was coming in Bridges' eyes. He leaped back as if shot from a spring as guns roared and bullets whistled through the cabin and plunked into the wall. Two shots from his hip and both candles were extinguished.

The firing ceased, but only two figures could be seen in the dim light that filtered through the door and window. These were the figures of Bridges and Parsons.

"Don't move!" came the sharp command from Tonto, who was crouched in a dark corner.

"Lay off outside!" shouted Bridges. "I'm going to light the candles!"

"Put your guns on the table," Tonto ordered.

In a few moments a match flared and then the candles were lighted. Tonto stood in a corner away from the door and the window. His gun covered the two men at the table, who had put down their weapons as directed.

"Bring me that hat an' note," Tonto ordered.

It was Parsons who complied. His eyes stared deep into Tonto's as he handed over the hat and note. Bridges had cooled off and his face wore a different expression; his gaze was milder. Both men undoubtedly realized that Tonto could have shot them down with ease, even though their own guns had blazed.

"Anything more to ask?" said Tonto to Bridges.

"Nope." Bridges blurted the word and took out his papers and tobacco to fashion a cigarette. It was as if nothing had happened and he had made no attempt to take Tonto's life. Maybe his move had been a bluff, and none had shot to hit Tonto—a foolish test.

"That was a mistake," he said slowly, keeping his eyes on the cigarette he was rolling. "The men got no signal from me, as you thought. They came near costing me my life, perhaps, an' you were mighty lucky. I'm not asking you to believe it."

"I'll believe it," said Tonto shortly. "Pick up your guns an' let's get started."

Parsons swore in amazement, and Bridges spoke to him sharply. "Tell 'em to get the horses; we're on our way."

When Parsons had left, Tonto stepped quickly to the table and looked Bridges squarely in the eyes. Outside men were hurrying away to get their mounts. No one was in hearing distance.

"Listen, Bridges," said Tonto rather pleasantly, "if you've got any more suspicions now's the time to air 'em. Don't forget that I'm not double crossing you. You don't even know who I am. If you've got any doubts, now is the time to back out."

"I'll take a chance," said Bridges. He actually smiled.

The two men stood with their gaze locked as Parsons reëntered the cabin. Then Tonto went for his horse.

In the shadow of the timber, Tonto paused. He was thinking hard—thinking hard of Bridges' smile. It had been a treacherous smile. And now Tonto was thinking, too, of the great danger he was in. He had not seen fit to reveal his real identity to a soul thereabouts. He had placed his trust in a girl—a dancing, singing girl who had attracted him from the first time he had seen her. There was still time to change his tactics, and so he hesitated. A minute passed—another. Then, tight-

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lipped, he turned to his horse and soon was riding to join the cavalcade at the cabins.

"We'll take the lead," he told Bridges.

They rode at a canter up the basin and took the trail which led up the eastern ridge. Myriads of stars hung in a velvet sky. The moon had come up and the trail was fairly well lighted except where it passed through thick tree growth. There the horses kept to the trail of their own accord. Tonto had noted that Bridges and all his men were splendidly mounted.

In time they reached the crest of the ridge, and then Tonto led the way along the trail he had traversed that afternoon. It was past midnight when they reached the foot of the high range from which he had surveyed the narrow valley leading northward. Here he called a halt.

"There's no use in our trying to go the rest of the distance at night," he told Bridges. "The trail is a hard one, and we'll hold up here until daylight."

"All right, men," sang Bridges.

The next moment a thin shadow swept over Tonto's head. He dodged and his hand dropped to his gun like lightning. But he was too late. The rope settled over his shoulders, tightened, and he was jerked out of his saddle to the ground in a twinkling, losing his weapon as he struck.

This time it was Bridges' laugh that sounded harshly on the night air.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTIVE.

HELPLESSLY bound by the rope and unable to rise from the ground, Tonto echoed Bridges' laugh. But it infuriated Bridges because, though he held Tonto captive, there was a different tone in the latter's laugh. It rang confidently, cheerful, taunting, almost gay.

"I'll give you a chance to laugh at the coyotes," Bridges snarled. "Tie him up an' put him on a horse."

"What do you think this is going to get you?" Tonto mocked.

"It's goin' to give me a lot of satisfaction to put away a crooked sneak," Bridges replied grimly. "Playin' us for a bunch of locoed fools, eh? I could've got you in town if I'd wanted. You must think I'm dumb."

"You had your chance to shoot it out," said Tonto coolly.

They put him on a horse—not his own, which he knew they were going to steal—and started up the ridge. Halfway up the treacherous trail they turned off into a dense growth of timber. In time they reached a small clearing in which was a shack long since abandoned and left to the furies of wind and storm. It was a wild, isolated spot. There would be no reason for any one to visit the place and if they left him there it would be a risky prospect.

Inside the shack, Tonto was thrown on a bunk on which was an old straw tick. Then Bridges took a candle from his pocket, lighted it, stuck it on a shelf, and sat down on a bench in front of the bunk. He laughed again as he rolled and lighted a cigarette and gloated over his captive.

"You know, Tonto," he said seriously; "I can't see what your idea was. I knew from the start you wasn't what you claimed to be. I don't say now that I know what you are. But you're not a rustler, an' you ain't got any cattle up here, an' you ain't got any men."

"You're not so bright," scoffed Tonto.

"Listen!" Bridges leaned forward, with his eyes gleaming. "I'm bright enough to know that you're some kind of law."

"If that's the case, don't you think you're taking a chance?" was the calm rejoinder.

"I have plenty of men in these hills," the other retorted gruffly. "I know every move you made since you left

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town. I'm not goin' to kill you. I'm too smart for that. But I'm goin' to leave you here. There's about as much chance of anybody finding you here before the owls have eaten your eyes out—if they do that—as there is of you getting away. I won't even take your money, an' I know you pack plenty. I've forbidden the boys to take your horse, because it might get us in trouble." He turned toward the door. "Parsons!" he called loudly. Then, when Parsons entered: "Search him!"

"I wouldn't mind a cigarette," Tonto observed; "it might keep the wolves away."

Bridges hesitated. Then he rolled a cigarette, thrust it between Tonto's lips and let him smoke it.

Regardless of the fact that Bridges had Tonto at a strict disadvantage, he plainly was uncertain.

"I might be mistaken," he compromised. "Why don't you come clean? I've helped people in trouble before; I might help you."

Tonto's laugh echoed in the shack. "After this?" he said. "Bridges, I wouldn't trust you after this any farther than I could throw this shack with my right hand behind my back. Parsons! Out of those things you've taken from my pockets, will you wind my watch and leave it where I can see it? For the rest, keep 'em."

Parsons put his find on the table.

"Pull off his boots," Bridges commanded.

But Parsons found nothing in the boots or the socks. He then examined Tonto's money belt, which revealed six thousand dollars.

"He'll have no use for that," grunted Bridges, pocketing the money.

"It might help out with the bail," Tonto suggested.

Bridges' eyes blazed. "Then you are the law!" he cried. "I thought so from the start. But you didn't play your cards right."

He rose abruptly, kicking back the bench. "Here you stay," he thundered. "Throw that slicker over him. If we ever meet up again—which we won't—remember I treated you square."

"I'm not asking any favors." Tonto's reply was almost insolent. "You'll be back, Bridges—back in time, too."

"Tell me who you are an' I'll let you go this minute!" thundered the big man.

"I'm Tonto," purred the captive. "You ought to know that."

With a snarl, Bridges swept out the candle, leaving the room in darkness.

"Come on, Parsons," he ordered, and the two men hurried out of the place."

Tonto lay quietly looking out at the scattered stars through a window. He heard the men mount and ride away. Would they come back? If not, his situation was more dangerous than he had expected. Perhaps he had played his cards too strong. That letter he had left with Loretta! The action might come too late—the move on the part of the sheriff's office might miscarry. He had no particular respect for sheriff's offices. And they might think it was a trick. Here was a prisoner in an old shack off the trail. He ejected the cigarette end and twisted at his bonds until his wrists and arms and legs were raw. His captors had done their work well.

"Before I had expected," he muttered many times, thinking of his speedy and unexpected capture.

Bridges had left matches on the table. The candle had been knocked somewhere on the floor across the room. Tonto managed to roll off the crude bunk. He could not get up to the table but he succeeded in overturning it. Then followed a long, painful search for the matches. At last he found them. He rested before, rolling and hitching along, he found the candle. Although his wrists were tightly bound he could use his hands to a degree. He rested again; then he managed to light a match

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and the candle. In the early morning darkness its slight flame could be seen for some distance. He tried burning through the ropes that bound him but only succeeded in putting out the light in the candle several times until only one match was left. He could take no chance. He lighted the candle, stuck it on the floor, and lay on his back, panting.

It was down to the last inch when he heard stealthy steps outside. Bridges had changed his mind and had come back to kill him, or had sent some of his henchmen to do the unpleasant task! A moment of swift thinking and he blew out the light. The great, deep silence of the forest closed in. Then a horse neighed and a figure appeared in the dimly lighted doorway.

Tonto waited, expecting the worst, and in his exhausted condition, hardly caring.

He noted the figure was not that of Bridges, for this man was short and slim. He could remember no such man in the score or so with Bridges. Then, as he heard the voice, his heart gave a leap and then seemed to freeze.

"Mister Tonto—are you here?"

It was the youth Juan, who apparently had followed from town and had seen what had happened. The youth had shown all the traits of a skillful trailer. Tonto, fearless in the face of blazing guns, shuddered at the thought of cold steel. He lay still, making no sound.

Juan slipped into the room, felt on the bunk, stumbled over the prostrate form of Tonto on the floor.

"Ah!"

Then a match flared and Tonto looked up into the gleaming eyes of the youth.

"Ah!" breathed Juan. "Not so good, eh?"

Tonto did not reply. He held the youth's eyes with his own narrowed, burning gaze. But Juan looked quickly about and spotted the short length of candle. This he secured, lighted, and placed on the bench. Then he sat on the bunk and Tonto saw the hatred burning in his eyes.

"They fix you, eh?" said Juan in his sibilant voice.

"You ran with the pack, then?" said Tonto in contempt. "An' now you've got your chance. I'm helpless, but I don't believe you've got the nerve to kill me, Juan. I'm a man an' you're a coward!"

The boy sprang to his feet. "I'm not afraid!" he breathed. "I would kill you quick!" There was the deadly glitter of the knife. "But I'm here to put you free!"

Tonto stared. Then his laugh rippled through the shack.

"You don't believe?" cried Juan. "See!" He sprang from the bunk, stooped down, and with quick slashes of his knife severed the thongs that bound Tonto. Then he stepped back, his eyes blazing.

"Don't think I do it for you," he sneered. "Miss Loretta, she tell me to follow you an' see nothing happen to you. I beg not to go, but she said 'yes'—an' I come. I will do what she say any time! You hear? I do this for her. I would rather slip the knife in your heart. I hate you!"

Tonto got to his feet and studied the face of the youth silently. Juan thought enough of the girl he loved to do her bidding and save the life of a possible rival. This must be Latin loyalty, for Juan was most certainly Spanish.

Tonto rolled a cigarette and inhaled deeply. Then he suddenly stepped to Juan's side, put his left hand on the boy's shoulder and held out his right.

Juan shrank back, but he could not take his eyes from Tonto's.

"Shake hands for Miss Loretta's sake," suggested Tonto, in his soft, musical voice. "I mean her no harm."

The youth took the extended hand a

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moment and then dropped it as if it were molten lead. He leaped back.

"You make the believe you love her!" he accused.

"I never make believe," said Tonto slowly. "I have not said I love her. She is my friend, don't you see? Why don't you be my friend, too, Juan? You could have killed me here an' gone back an' said Bridges did it. No one could have proved otherwise. You could have shot me, for I see you have a gun. Bridges would not use a knife."

Juan was noncommittal, but Tonto saw his words had made him thoughtful. Then the youth drew the gun and tossed it on the bunk.

"I guess you've lost yours an' will need it," he said.

"Yes, I'll need it," said Tonto. "Did you see anything of my horse, Juan."

"It is in the meadow," replied the youth with a scowl. "I drove it in."

"That's good," said Tonto with great satisfaction. "Now, Juan, I'm going to ask you to do something for me. You must keep what I tell you a secret—tell no one. An' it'll be a favor to Miss Loretta an' relieve her of a responsibility, understand?"

Juan nodded, looking at him curiously.

"You go back to town," Tonto instructed. "You see Miss Loretta at once—just as soon as you get there, which will be at dawn. You tell Miss Loretta to open the letter I gave her. You understand?" He repeated the message several times and made the youth repeat it after him. "When she opens the letter, she will know what to do," he finished.

Tonto caught up his horse, which Juan told him he had found tied in the timber back in the trail some distance. He had heard the horse neigh. Next, Juan left and sped like the wind down the trail toward town.

Tonto took a different direction. He proceeded cautiously up the ridge and when he reached its crest he turned to the right, to the southeast, and rode along its rocky spine for some distance before he descended the eastern slope—the slope opposite town and Miller's Wells. The first glimmer of dawn was in the east when he sped across the valley and mounted the slope on the other side.

Two hours later, Tonto rode into the courtyard of the Campbell ranch. As a man came to take his horse, he asked curtly from the saddle:

"Where's the foreman, Joe Flood?"

"Waal, I don't just know," drawled the wrangler. "Mebbe in the office in front, mebbe——"

"It isn't a question of maybe," said Tonto sharply. "I have to see him at once on important business. This is no social call."

The tone of his voice and his manner made an impression on the man. He scowled, but he answered:

"I reckon he's in the office in the front of the house."

Tonto spurred his lathered mount to the front porch, flung himself from the saddle, and ran up the steps, his spurs jingling. He rapped on the door and it was opened at once by a tall man with keen, gray eyes and a somewhat stiff bearing.

"I want to see Joe Flood," said Tonto.

"I'm Flood," frowned the other, who evidently did not relish his visitor's aggressive manner.

"All right, I've a message for you from Campbell, an' another from another place. Where will we talk?"

"Come in," Flood invited, and they entered the office.

"Here's a note from Campbell," said Tonto, tossing the missive on the table. He drew a card from the lining of his vest. "An' here's something else."

The foreman read the card and looked at Tonto with interest. Then he read the note.

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"Association man, eh," he said. "Well, I suppose you want to run with the bunch an' work out from here."

"No," Tonto snapped out with a grim smile. "I've done my work. I've found your stolen cattle. I played a little trick on the rustlers to get 'em on the scene an' starting the stock. I want you an' a bunch of men for to-night. I've sent word to the sheriff through a friend, an' there'll be another posse coming up from the other side."

"Whose crowd?" the foreman asked doubtfully.

"Bridges'," was the sharp retort.

"I had a hunch!" exclaimed Flood. "You worked alone, eh? Well, you'd better get a bite to eat an' snatch a few winks while I get in the men. I'll have your horse looked after. Where you from?"

"From out of the rain," said Tonto with a shrug. "But your advice sounds good. Where's the cook shack?"

CHAPTER XII.

THE RAID.

WITH dispatch and an aching heart, Juan fulfilled his mission. Loretta immediately opened the letter, and found it contained another which was addressed to Sheriff Crawford. She carried it herself to the sheriff's house and delivered it, explaining how it had come into her possession.

The sheriff was skeptical and opened it expecting to find some parting insult. He had been satisfied to see Tonto go—even if he went to work for Campbell. But as he read it, his brow wrinkled in perplexity.

"Some trick about it," was his comment as he put it back in its envelope.

Nevertheless, he hurried through his breakfast and made haste for his office. As usual, he found Deputy Hatton there ahead of him.

"Read this," he said, handing the letter to Hatton.

The deputy read and reread and whistled softly. "Why didn't he say what he was?" he demanded.

"That's it," nodded the sheriff; "it's some kind of a trick. Left it with Loretta to deliver. He could have told me who he was——" The sheriff paused thoughtfully. "I didn't know the Cattlemen's Association had any special agent. If they have, they must have got him lately. An' if this fellow Tonto is a special agent, then Patterson, the secretary, was just trying to hang one on me. Just like him. Mean disposition. Still——" He paused again and looked at his deputy.

"If he is what he claims to be, we've got to carry out his—his request," said Hatton. "If we don't, an' it's on the level, then Patterson would have it on us."

The sheriff nodded, frowning heavily. "He'll have something to explain to me," he promised. "I'm going to see Campbell about this; he's still in town."

The stockman had just finished breakfast when Crawford confronted him with the letter.

"I told you there was something different about that fellow," boomed the rancher. "Says he'll probably have to go to my place. Well, if he's located my cattle—been working on the sly——" He stopped abruptly, and glared at the sheriff. "Doesn't it look kind of queer that Bridges an' his bunch beat it out of town yesterday? Can't you see through an open window? This bird has followed 'em an' got the goods on 'em. There's no fake to this. Get your men out an' up there, like he says, an' I'm going to ride like greased lightning for the ranch!"

So it was that Crawford got his orders for the second time. But as he returned to his office he became excited. Here was a chance to get in on a big play and snare a good share of the credit.

"Round up twenty men we can trust,"

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he instructed Hatton. "Be sure, now—no leaking at the mouth. There may be work to do here yet. Shoot 'em out easy. We'll meet at Miller's Wells. An' see that this don't get to Rafferty."

Hatton caught some of his chief's enthusiasm; but he went about his work quietly and soon after noon men began to slip out of town. They were well mounted, well armed.

There was one who noticed this. It was Juan. Late in the afternoon he, too, stole up through the timber on his way to the rendezvous.

Meanwhile, Loretta, the dancing girl, sat upon the porch and stared unseeing at the glorious sunset, not heeding her mother's call to supper. What had become of Tonto—and why should she care? But she did care, and that was that. It had been mean of her to send the faithful Juan to spy upon him. She had regretted that impulse almost before Juan had got out of town; but it had been too late to stop him. Yet the move had proved a blessing. She thrilled with the thought that she had possibly saved Tonto's life. She had listened breathlessly to Juan's story. And then she had carried out Tonto's instructions eagerly. Since Bridges had meant to leave Tonto in the deserted cabin to die, he could have no connection with that suspected outlaw. She was glad—glad! But what new peril might he be inviting now?

"Yes, mother," she said finally, "I'm coming." But she had no appetite.

Shadows roved the prairie and climbed the foothills under a perfect moon which led the stars across a velvet sky. A wind filtered down through the tiers of firs and spruce and pine, laden with the subtle scent of resin, of mountain meadows, and the tang of snow-kissed peaks. The stream in the canyon was a fluttering silver ribbon, bound by purple bows of shadow. And the white trunks of the aspen and alders were swords upthrust to protect the canyon's beauty.

Silence. The vague, whispering silence of midnight.

But the flutter of new leaves was not the only movement. At the upper end of the canyon, where the trail began its climb to the upper fastnesses, was the dark, shifting shadow of a moving herd. Shadows of a sharper cut, swift moving, circled about. On the lower slopes of the canyon, two groups of horsemen were closing in, screened by the scanty tree growth.

Silence that palpitated—then the thunder of hoofs, hoarse cries of command, darting tongues of red, and the cracking of the flaming guns.

Within a few moments the whole upper end of the canyon was in turmoil, with horsemen dashing madly, cattle milling, clouds of dust adding to the confusion. But the two posses, racing down from either side of the canyon, had the herd and the rustlers surrounded before the latter could realize the situation.

The cattle already had been started up the trail which led into the mountains, and now these turned back as the men with them tried to pass them and get into the canyon to aid the others of the band. Spurts of flame came from the guns, and soon there were riderless horses plunging into the herd and down the canyon. Two cow-punchers deliberately dropped a steer at the narrow entrance to the trail to block it. In a short time the dust was so thick and choking that the riders on both sides had to draw back. But, following the order which Tonto had given before the attack, the members of the sheriff's and Campbell's posses kept on the outside. It was up to the rustlers to break through. Any attempt at this met with a withering fire.

Tonto, racing around the circle, shouting orders, disregarding the fact that his light vest made a constant tar-

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get for hostile guns, saw a rider fall from his saddle, and then, with his foot caught in the stirrup, being dragged by his horse. In a moment Tonto sped after the runaway and with a single shot felled the horse. To his surprise it was the youth, Juan, who looked up at him in the moonlight.

Tonto was off his mount in an instant, extricating the boy's foot and raising him in his arms.

"Where are you hit?" he asked anxiously.

"Left—left arm," stammered Juan. "But I shouldn't have fallen," he added bitterly.

Tonto opened the boy's vest and shirt and felt the warm blood on his left arm. He tore off the vest and ripped the left arm of the shirt. In a short space he had the wound tightly bandaged with his own silk handkerchief. Meanwhile, he asked two questions.

"How'd you get here?"

"Followed the sheriff's outfit," was the answer.

"An' the sheriff let you join 'em?" Tonto asked angrily.

"I joined without asking him, an' nobody knew the difference," replied Juan. "It was dark."

The youth stood up when Tonto had finished with his first aid. The horse was a short distance away.

"Come on an' I'll help you on your horse," Tonto commanded. "You can ride all right, an' you get out of this."

In the saddle, Juan realized that Tonto had saved his life and turned to call to him. But Tonto was riding like the wind.

The rustlers had made a desperate attempt to break away while Tonto was attending to Juan. They had been partly successful. Two riders bore down on Tonto, while up the canyon the rustlers were yielding, surrendering by throwing away their weapons and holding their hands in the air. Members of both posses were pursuing the two who had escaped but were being outdistanced rapidly.

The two fleeing outlaws kept close together as they neared Tonto, spurring their horses to their fastest pace. Tonto's eyes shot a green fire and his lips froze into a white line. He recognized the forms in the saddles on the rushing horses, for they were riding straight into the light of the moon. They were Bridges and Parsons. He realized their purpose also. When near enough—in range—they would split, one veering to the left, the other turning to the right. Then they would loose their guns, and he would be caught between them. He might get one of them—that he would get both was a remote possibility, for they were good shots. In any event, it was a case of two pistol experts against one. He could turn and run, taking a chance on having the fastest horse to avoid being shot in the back. There were few moments in which to decide. Then Tonto's face went white with his sudden decision.

The pair were almost within range. Tonto fancied he could see the fire in Bridges' eyes. Bridges was riding on the left—on Tonto's left. As he expected, the pair suddenly parted, Bridges to the left; parsons to the right. They came at breakneck speed. There were two bursts of fire, guns roared in the close confines of the canyon. Then Tonto played his trick.

He checked his horse and went flying to the ground from his saddle. He landed squarely on his feet, and the next moment his gun spit flame. Taken unawares, both bandits were firing high. Tonto's gun barked again and Parsons passed him, reeling from the saddle.

Tonto had dropped to his knees, and his next shot caused Bridges' horse to rear and plunge forward, throwing its rider over its head. Tonto had shot the animal in the shoulder. The members of the posse closed in about them.

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Juan had ridden back when he had seen Tonto's peril.

"Don't touch him!" Tonto commanded, in a voice that rang through the canyon.

Bridges sat up, saw his gun near by, and sheathed it. Then he got to his feet, looked about for his hat, and picked it up a few feet away. He had been stunned by the fall, but now he whirled on Tonto.

It was a strange scene, with the ring of riders and the two unmounted men in the center, facing each other a few paces apart. The moonlight shone coldly upon the group, and beyond were the dense shadow of timber and the canyon walls. Sheriff Crawford and Tom Campbell were there, leaning forward upon their saddle horns, almost breathless with excitement. Tonto, who had had the drop on Bridges, had sheathed his gun! Bridges had but one of his weapons, and it was on his right side. His eyes were blazing with seething fury.

"You—double crosser!" he shot at Tonto from between his teeth.

"There was no double cross, Bridges," said Tonto sternly. "I led you toward the cattle you stole. I made you suspicious of me from the start. I knew you would grab me sooner or later, and I took the chance. I knew you'd start moving the herd the moment you saw I was wise. That was what I wanted —you an' your crew of cutthroats with the cattle! I took the risk of capture, although I didn't expect it so soon. An' while I couldn't get free after you had tied me up, I could have shaken the derringer out of my right sleeve an' shot you in the shack. I would have done it if I had thought it would do any good. Look!"

Tonto made a quick downward motion with his right arm and the little gun glinted in his palm.

"Held by a spring, Bridges, controlled by my arm!"

The next instant the derringer was on the ground, and Tonto's mocking laugh rippled in the deathlike stillness. Then he cried:

"You're under arrest, Bridges. I'm the law!"

With a snarl of rage, Bridges' right hand moved like lightning. There was a spurt of fire at Tonto's right hip. Bridges seemed to tug at his gun as if it were cemented to its holster. Then his hand went limp and he fell forward, out of the moonlight, out of the canyon—into nothing.

CHAPTER XIII.

INTO THE RAIN.

A FULL minute passed before there was any movement among the circle of riders, or any speech. Tonto stood beside the motionless form on the ground. He still held his gun in his hand—a queerly picturesque figure there in the moonlight. Then he spoke, slowly, distinctly, in a voice that was easily heard by all.

"I called the turn on him for personal reasons. He did not have to draw. He could have waited to be hanged. An' this is all I've got to say." He caught up his horse and mounted. With a flourish of hoofs he was on his way up the canyon to order the prisoners taken to the jail.

The riders who had witnessed that remarkable spectacle found their voices and began to talk.

"Gun Ghost is right!" boomed Tom Campbell. "With Bridges it was a case of suicide." And such was the general opinion.

Juan came forward with the information that Parsons was lying where he had fallen from his horse some little distance away. A hurried examination found the outlaw to be badly wounded but alive. Joe Flood and one of the punchers took him in charge. Tom Campbell and the sheriff looked

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over the herd of steers. All bore the Campbell brand.

"I had a hunch all along that Bridges was in it," growled Campbell.

"But, listen, Tom," said the sheriff. "How does it come that the cattle were cached so close to the ranch from your north range, an' still your men didn't run across them?"

"That's where Bridges was smart in the first place. In the second place, I told you we only discovered how many were gone just the other day an' hadn't had a chance to send out a bunch of men. Bridges figured he'd be able to get 'em over the hump before anything much was done. But I never expected any help from the association. Never dreamed they'd hired a special agent like this Tonto. But Patterson must have had his reasons for keeping it a secret."

"I've got a question or two to ask this Tonto," said the sheriff.

"Oh, I've seen his credentials an' his work, sheriff. I'm satisfied, an' you better lay off of him, for he's hot stuff."

"I'm going to ask him something just the same. Now, I'll take the prisoners into the lockup an' your men can look after the cattle. It's already getting daylight."

Campbell found Tonto. "You'd better come along to the ranch with me an' have breakfast an' snatch some sleep," he invited. "Crawford's men are going to take in the prisoners, an' my men will look after the cattle. I reckon you an' me can lay off for a spell."

"Not me," said Tonto, rather curtly. "I'm not finished."

Gone was the gay, debonair adventurer, the carefree, youthful vagabond of the plains with the soft, silky voice and the rippling laugh. None who had seen him when he had ridden into Cherry Run out of the rain would recognize the same characteristics now.

"As a member an' supporter of the Cattlemen's Association," said the stockman, "it seems to me that I've a right to ask a question or two. How'd you come to go to work for us? They never told me anything about hiring a special agent."

"You don't keep very close in touch with the operations of the association, do you?" Tonto countered. "If you'd been on the board of directors, you'd have known. An' you'd have been on the board if you'd attended any of the meetings. It's none of my business, but Patterson told me to tell you. Don't worry, none of the other members know it yet. We're working in the dark. He sent me out here first so you'd pay more attention to the meetings. I've a few more jobs ahead of me."

"Well—I—you see, the office is so far," stammered Campbell. "I mean it's way out to the east end of the county, an'—oh, dang it! I didn't have much faith in it, to tell the truth."

"I reckon you'll have more faith now," Tonto drawled.

"Anyway, they got a good man when they did get one," Campbell observed; "but you're a queer worker."

"You'll think so when you get your extra assessment for dues," said Tonto dryly. "I don't come cheap. An' I have my own way of working."

"You must have had this whole thing spotted before you showed up in Cherry Run," Campbell surmised admiringly.

"I did," Tonto conceded shortly. "But I wasn't telling anybody."

"You've got the sheriff's goat," grinned the stockman. "He says he's going to ask you some questions."

"I'll tell him," Tonto promised. "Now I've got to get going. Tell your foreman I hope I'll meet up with him again. So long." He held out his hand and Campbell grasped it with a thrill. For a few moments he held in his own the fastest gun hand he had ever known. He watched Tonto lope down the canyon.

When Tonto reached the valley, he

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overtook Juan. "How you feeling?" he asked the youth, who appeared pale.

"Good enough." The boy's eyes no longer showed resentment.

"We'll ride in together," said Tonto.

The sun was high in the sky when they reached town. Tonto cautioned the youth to say nothing of what had taken place and to go at once to the doctor's office. This Juan readily promised to do. Tonto rode on to the livery, turned his horse over to the barnman with special instructions as to its care, and then went to the hotel for a meal and a few hours' sleep. His final bit of work did not require his attention at once, and he preferred to leave it until later, anyway.

When he awoke, shortly before three o'clock, and went down to the street he found the town in the throes of the greatest sensation it ever had known. Sheriff Crawford had returned with the captured rustlers. News of the dramatic ending of Bridges' evil career had spread like wildfire. The wounded Parsons had been hurried to the Campbell ranch, and the doctor had gone there. And the chief figure in the endless excited talk had been, and still was, Tonto.

So, when Tonto, again immaculate and magnificent, but unsmiling and grim, sauntered down the street, the throngs on the sidewalks were treated to another sensation. Excited groups ceased talking as he passed them, and though many would have saluted him, he kept his gaze straight ahead. In pairs and groups they followed him, curious and admiring.

Tonto turned into the Klondike and strode quickly down along the throng at the bar. At his accustomed station at the lower end stood Rafferty. When he saw Tonto his ruddy features turned the color of lead. As Tonto neared him, Rafferty stepped around the corner of the bar. With a flying leap and a swing, Tonto was over the bar, his weight crashing down upon the resort keeper just as a shot rang out. Tonto wrenched the weapon from the man's hand and rose to his feet, motioning toward the private office.

Rafferty, his face now white as chalk, got up and went in as ordered. Inside, he turned on Tonto, his whole body trembling.

"That was in self-defense," he said, pointing a shaking finger.

"What makes you think that?" said Tonto coldly. "I didn't make any move against you."

"But you were going to!" exclaimed Rafferty. "Just because I mixed a little with Bridges an' those others because they were good spenders, you was coming after me. You're a killer! I shot in self-defense."

"All right," said Tonto calmly, with a wave of his hand. "We'll let it go at that." He pointed to a chair. "Sit down!" he commanded sharply.

When Rafferty sank into his office chair, Tonto took another and coolly rolled a cigarette. The delay told on Rafferty, and he wiped the moisture from his forehead and the palms of his hands.

Tonto lit his smoke. "Are you ready to talk, Rafferty?" he asked quietly. "Not to me, but to the sheriff."

"Talk?" cried Rafferty. "I haven't got anything to talk about. What do you mean?"

"Yes, you've got plenty to talk about," said Tonto. "You can tell how you staked this crowd until they could make good on stolen cattle. You can tell what Bridges told you. You can tell just how you were the brains behind several raids. You can explain about several branding irons in your little cellar."

Rafferty gripped the arms of his chair, his eyes starting from their sockets. "Lies," he whispered.

"I'm giving you a chance, Rafferty," said Tonto, in the same quiet voice. "I'm giving you a chance to sell this

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place an' get out of town." Tonto's voice changed suddenly and became cold as ice. "Rafferty, you're under arrest! Now you can talk, sell out, an' get out with a piece of change in your pocket, or—you can go to jail!"

Rafferty bit his lips. His voice croaked in his throat. But he nodded his assent until he could manage to get out: "I'll talk."

"That's sensible," Tonto observed. The things he had learned, and what the grateful Juan had told him on the way back to town certainly had done the trick.

They walked up the street to the sheriff's office. "He's got Rafferty!" was the whispered word. "He's got Rafferty!"

At the sheriff's office, Tonto learned that Parsons, near death, also had talked. Then, with the sheriff, he listened to Rafferty tell everything he knew and, incidentally, give the sheriff information that would enable him to make several creditable arrests.

"You can go," said the satisfied official when Rafferty had finished.

"On one consideration, sheriff," said Tonto; "that he sells out an' gets out pronto. I made that stipulation."

Crawford looked at Rafferty. "You heard?" he asked.

Rafferty nodded.

"Well, that goes," said the sheriff, motioning him toward the door.

When the resort keeper had left, the sheriff looked at the placid Tonto and frowned.

"Why didn't you tell me who you were when you first came?" he demanded.

"I prefer to work in my own way; besides, I had instructions from Patterson," replied Tonto. "An' on top of that you jumped me right off the bat an' ordered me out of town without reason."

"Humph!" snorted the sheriff. "I reckon Patterson will think a little more about this end of the county after this."

"You'll get a lot of credit out of this thing, sheriff," smiled Tonto. "You should worry about me or anybody else."

Sheriff Crawford looked at him speculatively. "You're the smartest man in your line I ever met," he said finally. "Will you tell me where you come from?"

"They borrowed me from an outfit in a tougher country than this," said Tonto. "But Patterson told me not to tell."

The sheriff was swearing roundly as Tonto left, his rippling laugh sounding outside the door.

Tonto walked thoughtfully to the hotel and went to his room. There he discarded his gun and cartridge belt. He flung them into a drawer of the bureau with a fierceness which showed no fondness for them. Then he sat down by the window and looked out upon the green of the tall, stately cottonwoods. He remained thus, rolling and smoking cigarette after cigarette, for an hour. Then he donned the big, gray hat, and once more went down into the street.

It was again the hour of the sunset. The crimson banners were drifting over the western peaks. The evening breeze was stirring in the leaves, bringing the scent of flowing green grasses. The world was filled with the sweetness of the prairie spring.

Loretta answered his rap on the door of the little white cottage. She started back a bit as she saw him, and then smiled.

"It's good to see you—safe," she said slowly.

"An' it was good of you to deliver my note, and wiser than you think to send Juan to trail me," said Tonto gravely. "Let's sit out here on the porch a minute or two. There's a tolerable good sunset."

She came out, closing the door, and

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they sat on the seat which faced the west.

"Have you seen Juan?" he asked, merely by way of an opening.

"Why, yes—of course. Naturally he would come to see me. He has changed toward you, Tonto, changed wonderfully. Says you saved his life an'——"

"Did he say anything about him probably saving mine?" Tonto broke in dryly.

"Why, yes," replied the girl, looking at him in surprise. "And it was fine of him. Of course, he told me. He told me everything, and——"

"Everything!" exclaimed Tonto. "What do you mean by that?"

The girl's eyes widened. "Why, about—why, all that took place. And, Tonto, you took an awful chance. With two of them after you, and then with that Bridges! Tonto, you didn't do what—what you did to him because of what I told you about the past, did you?"

"That little scoundrel," Tonto breathed. "He promised me——" He looked at her queerly. "I dropped him in his tracks because he tried to draw."

"Are you sure?" she asked softly.

He evaded the question. "The crowd's cleaned up," he told her in a businesslike manner. "An' Rafferty's going. I saw to that. But you won't lose your job—position, I mean. An' if I have anything to say about it—an' I'll have plenty—you won't have to hold on to that long."

"What do you mean?" He could hardly hear her voice.

The crimson banners had faded, leaving a turquoise sky. The purple twilight already was creeping down from the higher hills. The wind had freshened.

He put his hand on hers. "Loretta, I'm going away in the morning," he said softly. "But I'm coming back. I have to come back, for that matter. When I come back, I'll tell you what I meant by what I said. You'll—listen, won't you?"

A long, throbbing silence. "Yes," she whispered finally.

He took her in his arms and kissed her and held her while the twilight rode in on the scented wind.

When Tonto came into the livery in the morning a soft spring rain was falling. He favored the liveryman with his old flashing smile and tossed him a gold piece.

"I came in in the rain, an' I'm going out in the rain," he said cheerily. "I reckon that means luck."

"I don't know what that means," grinned the other; "but I know what this means." He tossed up the gold piece and pocketed it.

A quarter of an hour later, Tonto rode away.

Coming Next Week, a novel, "CALL OF THE TIMBER," by HOWARD J. PERRY.

TO SAVE WESTERN GAME

INADEQUATE grazing grounds and short open seasons have taken such a toll among the antelope and elk that they will soon be extinct if measures to protect them are not taken at once. As a result of this situation, sportsmen have united in a plan to save them. A drive headed by Courtland E. Durand, of Montana, who is a rancher and the manager of the Wild Elk Corporation Club, has already been started, and all States are being asked to order closed seasons for the rapidly vanishing species. It is hoped that clubs to protect wild game will be formed in all Western States.

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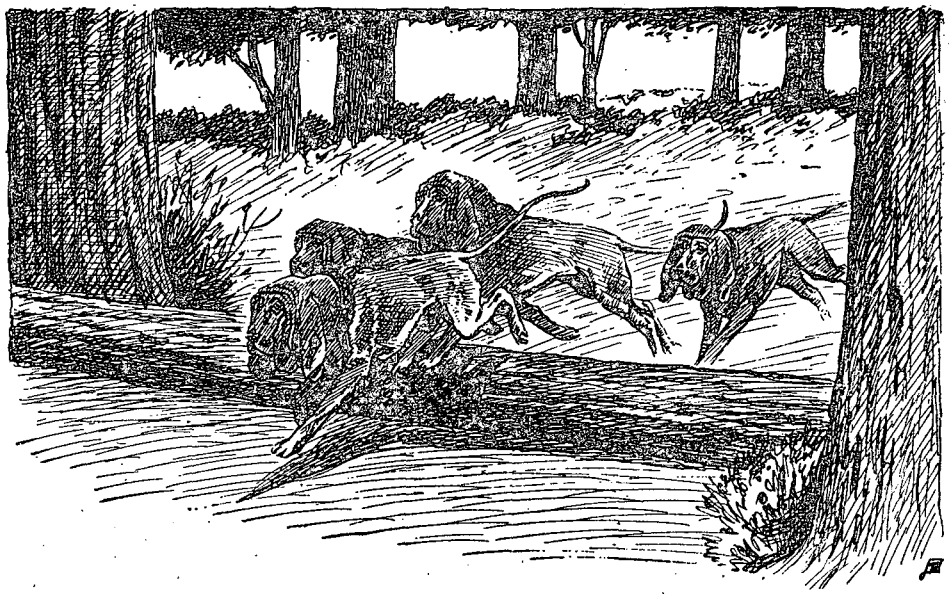

Man Hunters

By Harley P. Lathrop

Author of "Branded on the Back," etc.

E were talking about dogs. "Take any given group of people and you'll find the vast majority are confirmed dog lovers," asserted the round-up boss authoritatively. "I'm as convinced of that as I am that two and two make four."

The chance was too good to miss. It's seldom, if ever, one catches the round-up boss napping.

"Listen," I retorted, "I'll wager I can point out several groups numbering well into the hundreds of persons, nine out of ten of whom have no more use for a dog than I have for a pet rattlesnake."

"You've made a bet," snapped the round-up boss instantly. "Where are they?"

"Texas," I replied. "I won't try to say how many convicts are confined on the various prison farms, because I don't know. Plenty, at any rate. But I do know this. Not one in fifty among the convicts who attempt to escape ever succeeds in eluding the dogs set on their tracks. And take it from me, boss, those prisoners just naturally hate the canine breed like poison."

The round-up boss leaned forward. "What type of dogs are used?" he questioned. "Bloodhounds?"

Now, despite the fact that for fifteen years I had ranched within an hour's ride of several prison farms, I was compelled to admit my ignorance.

"Search me," I replied. "All that I know about them is they're sure enough man catchers."

"Well, suppose you find out when you get home," the round-up boss suggested. "I'd like to hear about 'em, and unless

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I'm sadly mistaken, so would several million readers."

So that is why one morning a few weeks later found me nearing one of the State farms with a letter of introduction to a certain Captain Powell.

Approximately two miles distant and paralleling the highway which I traveled, loomed a junglelike line of timber marking the Brazos bottoms. The land between the highway and the timber had been recently plowed, and in the exact center of this plowing stood the farm itself, a miscellaneous lot of one-story structures, newly whitewashed. In the bright sunshine they shone like freshly washed porcelain.

Leaving the main highway for a road that ran straight as an arrow through the chocolate-colored fields, I presently drew up amid the mess halls and sleeping quarters. But for the lack of a huge, white-porticoed house, one could easily have mistaken the prison farm for an ordinary Brazos bottom plantation. There were no inclosing walls or other visible evidences of restraint. A medium-sized man could easily have kicked himself out of any one of the flimsily constructed wooden buildings. Nor was the place patrolled by armed keepers. One long, lean guard, dressed like a cowboy, lounged idly on the gallery of a small shack marked "Office," sleepily indifferent to what was going on about him.

Meantime, the quarters swarmed with life. Six hundred convicts, a third of whom were serving sentences of upward of twenty years, was the farm's present quota. And fully half of these, now the spring plowing was over, loafed about the place. I asked the guard where I might find Captain Powell.

"Him and the dog sergeant took a bunch of boys down in the bottom to clear brush," he replied. "Drive straight ahead through yonder gate and yo' can't miss 'em."

"Have they any dogs with them?" I inquired.

The guard looked at me as if I had questioned the shape of the earth. "I reckon," he assented briefly.

On my way to the gate I passed a small shed standing within an inclosure formed by upright live oak palings. Through an occasional crack I could distinguish the outlines of several dark-colored dogs dozing in the sunshine. And when I got out to open the gate, I suddenly realized the place was swarming with puppies.

At the door of a mess-hall kitchen half a dozen weanlings, each one as black as a club flush, were scuffling over a pan of food under the watchful eye of a cook's helper. In the angle of a woodpile three tiny pups, none of which would have weighed five pounds, had cornered a huge red rooster and were baying him with excited yaps, while a group of laughing convicts called out encouragement. Here and there in close proximity to the denim-clad prisoners fully a half score more frisked and played.

All this caused me to wonder if I hadn't been a little hasty in asserting the Texas prison hounds to be man-killers. Surely it was unreasonable to expect pups reared in this manner ever to develop into man hunters.

I found Captain Powell and the dog sergeant at the lower end of a huge field where the plowed ground met the timber. Astride their horses, they were directing the labors of a great number of convicts who were grubbing away with hoes at the surrounding dense undergrowth.

Captain Powell is a heavy-set man, a little gray, with an enviable record of twenty years of prison work behind him. Blue-eyed, soft-voiced, and deliberate, with a kindly manner, he, nevertheless, bears the reputation of being a bad man to monkey with.

The dog sergeant was an alert, quick,

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sandy-complexioned person, considerably younger than his superior.

After learning the object of my visit, the captain grinned.

"Shore yo' can see the dogs," he said heartily. "We got some of the likeliest pups on the farm out here with us this mo'nin'. Come this way."

Sliding from his horse, he motioned me to follow. Near the edge of the timber, in the shade of a little copse of brush, squatted a young Negro convict. Over one shoulder was strung a horn and in one hand he carried a heavy dog whip. Close by, lay an even dozen hounds coupled in braces. At our approach they got lazily to their feet.

And right here, folks, is when I got an eyeful. What hounds these were! Never before had I seen a dozen dogs so perfectly matched in size, color, and conformation. Hard as nails, no one of them would have missed seventy-five pounds by as many ounces. Each dog was black, as black as coal, save for the underpart of throat and belly, which shaded to a light tan.

Their build showed much of the straight-limbed legginess and heightened shoulder that marks the true Walker hound. But there the resemblance to this sporting strain faded. There was no trace of the Walker's clean-cut head and muzzle. Rather one could distinguish a pronounced similarity to the bloodhound in the wrinkled, corrugated foreheads, the deep, mournful-looking, bloodshot eyes, and the heavy, downswinging dewlaps.

Nor was this the only outcross apparent. For strangely enough, each dog had a full-bosomed, deep-curving letter-S chest, and a long, ratlike tail. That to a hound man spells but one thing. Somewhere, somehow, generations back perhaps, but nevertheless there, a strain of greyhound had been introduced. It was all very puzzling, as well as pleasing, this admixture of types.

"Just what breed of hounds are these?" I inquired.

"Binfords," Captain Powell promptly enlightened me.

He could as well have said, "Biscuit hounds," or made some other facetious answer, and I would have been as badly at sea.

"It's a strain originated by an old fellow of that name," the captain hastened to explain, upon observing my blank look. "It took him the best part of a lifetime to develop the type, but they don't vary much nowadays. Of course, they aren't widely known outside prison circles, for their use is limited. They're man-killers pure and simple, and no other variety of game interests them."

Frankly, I found this last assertion hard to credit in face of the present evidence to the contrary. For, while we stood talking, a brace of dogs had come up beside me. One of them was now poking a cold muzzle against my hand in a mute plea for attention, while his brace mate was attempting to rear up and lick my face with his hot, moist tongue. These actions didn't square a little bit with my convictions regarding the manner in which man-killers should behave.

"Take Buck and Blue there," continued Captain Powell, designating the two fawning dogs, "they're as good a brace as I ever saw. Pull a man down in a minute."

"That's hard to believe, captain," I protested. "I've seldom seen a more friendly pair of hounds."

"All Binfords are friendly from the time their eyes are open," explained the captain. "And it sure helps when it comes to training 'em. We start a pup in to run by sight, because it's the most natural thing in the world for him to take after some person he's especially fond of. Then a little later we have that person disappear, and it's ninety-nine chances out of a hundred the pup

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will start smelling around to locate his trail. You know yourself any dog whelped will resort to his nose when his eyesight's no help to him. And we don't ever give 'em a chance to follow anything but man scent, either. In course of time they get so they'll stick to a person's trail right through the heart of a city if necessary. After a few chases the killing instinct seems to come to them naturally."

"Will these dogs tackle any one who is not in convict garb, captain?" I asked.

"Will they?" responded the captain. "Let me tell yo' something. Whosoever's trail they're on is the bird they're after, no matter how he's dressed. They'll tackle yo' or me or the dog sergeant here as quick as they would a convict, and don't yo' forget that."

I expect my face must have mirrored my disbelief, for after a sharp glance, Captain Powell turned to the dog sergeant.

"Looks like the only way we can convince this man is to give him a demonstration," he observed. "I reckon, me bein' too heavy to run, and him bein' company, yo're the one elected."

The dog sergeant glanced down at his feet and made a wry face. He was sporting a pair of boots obviously put on for the first time that morning.

"Shore swampy back in that brush a piece," he remarked sadly.

"Well, never mind that," encouraged Captain Powell. "Got to muddy 'em up some time. Let's go!"

The captain then proceeded to issue a few brief directions.

"Take it along the edge of the timber for a quarter," he ordered the sergeant. "After that, swing in a circle toward the river and hit the clearing a few hundred yards below where the men are at work. In that way we can see most of the chase without followin' the dogs."

"I got yo'," said the sergeant. "But don't turn 'em loose till I hit the clearin'. I might get mired back there in the swamp, and this is a travelin' bunch of dogs."

"Don't worry," assured the captain. "We'll play safe."

Now, somewhere I had picked up the idea that in order to acquaint man-chasing hounds with the trail they were to follow, some article of clothing belonging to the fugitive was first given them to smell. But this cherished theory was due for a sad upset.

The captain and the sergeant rode a short distance down the timber line and then the sergeant slid to the ground and started off. The captain led his horse back to where I waited, and that's all there was to it. No piece of wearing apparel changed hands, no trinket that might have borne the dog sergeant's scent; in fact, nothing, so far as I could see.

When Captain Powell returned, I asked him if the sergeant had left anything behind that would serve to identify him to the dogs as their quarry.

"Entirely unnecessary," he explained. "As I said before, the dogs will trail nothing but man scent. They'll pick up the sergeant's track the same way any other hound would a game trail."

Meantime, Buck and Blue had never for an instant ceased trying in their doggy way to insinuate themselves into my affections. By a sort of mutual consent, they had hedged me in between them, their bodies pressed close to my legs, their tails waving a continuous wigwag of friendship, while every so often a cold muzzle nosed my hand. Seldom have I ever encountered more friendly or affectionate dogs.

"Plumb spoiled, that pair is," remarked Captain Powell, motioning me to mount the sergeant's horse.

A half hour passed which Captain Powell spent overseeing the efforts of the laboring convicts. Then from the lower edge of the clearing came a hail, and the dog sergeant hove in sight.

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He was a disheveled-looking being, mud to his knees, brier scratched and perspiring. He passed us at a shambling trot, and continued straight through the convicts, going until he came to a scrubby live oak, up which he hurriedly shinned. When he was safely ensconced, things began to happen.

Captain Powell then dismounted, and walking across to where the hounds had lain down, spoke briefly to the boy in charge. In turn, he unslung the horn he wore over his shoulder, and blew a single long, wailing blast.

Have you ever seen a dozen ebony statues suddenly come to life? Well, no more had I, until that morning in the Brazos bottoms. Blue and Buck were fire on their feet. No longer were they the friendly pair of a short time before. They were man hunters now, nervously, alertly, ferociously alive and anxious. Poised on the balls of their feet, with hackles stiffly erect, their noses worked with little nervous twitchings, while deep, rumbling growls issued from each throat. Avatism, that's what it was! The blast of the horn had set them back countless generations when chase was the breath of life and capture meant a battle to the death with their quarry.

While the captain and dog boy were tugging the excited dogs toward the place where the sergeant had dismounted, I chanced to glance in the direction of the convicts. They had drawn together in an apprehensive group and I sensed a counting of noses. Then one of them pointed to the dog sergeant roosting in the tree. A burst of laughter followed and, moving apart, each one again took up his allotted task.

In the meantime Captain Powell, upon reaching a point a trifle to one side of where the sergeant's trail began, beckoned me to join him.

"Watch 'em pick it up now," he directed, and thereupon cast the dogs loose.

Their actions resembled those of any other hounds turned loose to quest for a trail, except that they were the embodiment of sheer, stark fury. From the roots of their tails to the base of their ears, each individual hair stood stiffly upright as they quartered back and forth, meanwhile uttering a constant succession of low, throaty growls.

Presently, Rowdy, a scarred old veteran whose age was manifest by his hoary muzzle and deeply corrugated forehead, broke into a hoarse, eager baying. The rest converged to him like a group of well-trained soldiers, and the hunt was on.

From the vantage point of the dog sergeant's horse, I watched the pack sweep down the timber line. For all that their build indicated speed, these dogs were not fast compared with the modern sporting hound. In fact, they would have been discarded from any wolf or fox pack for lack of legs. Their pace was a sort of slow gallop. Nevertheless, there was something in their manner of running, a sort of grim, determined finality that while not easy to describe, gave one the cold shivers. They ran abreast, each head glued to the ground, each dog trusting entirely to his own nose.

As they warmed to their work, the volume of their tonguing increased. I could detect no trace of the high, squalling tenor that is the natural mouth of a Walker or July hound when running a red-hot trail. The volume was much deeper, and carried a hoarse, savage undertone.

When, at length, the pack entered the brush, the sound of their baying softened. But it was always in evidence, a sonorous, never-ceasing rumble. At length after a short wait, the sound again began to swell in volume, growing deeper and more fearsome as the pack entered the home stretch. One

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could almost imagine that it was this menacing baying, not the faint breeze, that stirred the hanging festoons of gray Spanish moss.

At the edge of the clearing the toiling convicts again drew together in an apprehensive group, instinctively tightening their hold on their hoes while their eyes rolled fearfully toward the timber. Captain Powell observed their perturbation.

"Give 'em gangway when they come through and yo'll be safe enough, boys," he called. "They're not after any of yo' —this time."

Presently out of the wood came the dogs. A blanket would have covered the lot, and no man could say which hound was in the lead. Past the huddled group of convicts they swept, as unconcerned as if the men had been so many tree trunks. Each dog's brain, each dog's mind, each dog's interest, was fixed solely on the red-hot scent. I could readily believe Captain Powell's previous assertion that they would take a man's trail through a crowded city if necessary, with never a fault or deviation. For so wrapped up were they in the scent they followed, that they appeared to be running in a mesmeric trance.

But when they came to the tree where the dog sergeant had taken refuge, all pack unity disappeared. From now on it was every dog for himself, with each one a little more eager than his fellow.

You have, no doubt, observed the burning excitement of some zealous pup upon treeing his natural enemy the cat. Intensify this a thousandfold, add to it the tiger's mad lust for heartless killing, and the grim determination of an angry lion, and the mixture will give you some idea of the frenzy the pack now displayed.

Captain Powell was right. It made not one iota of difference to those hounds that the treed man was their master, that his was the hand which fed them when they were hungry, doctored them in time of illness; in fact, had guided the whole scheme of their existance from puppyhood up. He was their quarry! Affection was forgotten! They were primal, primal as their ancient wild-dog forbears! In the way of utter, insane desire to come to death grips, never in my life have I witnessed such eagerness as these hounds displayed.

Blue, who only a short while before had mutely pleaded for my affection, was an utterly transformed dog. Lips drawn tensely back, exposing a row of gleaming fangs, he would after a short run, leap twice his length into the air, his jaws clicking ominously together as he sought to reach the dog sergeant sitting on a limb above.

His brace mate, Buck, the one who had attempted to caress my face with a moist tongue, was likewise in a frenzy. Mouthing a note, half whine, half growl, his hackles as erect as a fighting gamecock's, his expressive, brown eyes burning red with intermixed hate and desire, he continually attempted to scale the upright tree trunk and thus come to grips with the fugitive.

Nor were the other dogs far behind in making known their intentions. Tonguing deeply, each one was the personification of utter savagery. Only an insane man would have left his perch and ventured down among them.

While I sat watching, the dog sergeant inadvertently dropped a red bandanna with which he was mopping his face. Like so many ravening wolves, the pack was on it. A pounce, a click of jaws, a sharp, rending tear and the handkerchief was so many shreds of red cotton cloth.

There was no manifest sign of failing watchfulness or lack of fighting spirit in the dogs when at length the captain asked me if I was satisfied. I nodded, and dismounting from his

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horse, whip in hand, he set to work to distract the pack's attention from their quarry.

"Here Blue! Buck! Rowdy! Rube! Come away from there, yo-all!" Calling each dog by name, he emphasized his command with a sharp snap of the whip. At length, he forced the grudging pack away from the tree and coupled them in pairs.

"Take 'em over yonder and let 'em cool off," directed the dog boy, motioning the sergeant to descend.

A half hour later I said good-byes in the midst of the pack. Blue's cold nose was pressed against my hand in a mute plea for affection. Buck, after vainly attempting to caress my face with a dripping tongue, had insinuated his head beneath my coat; while the dog sergeant, once more seated on his horse, caressed the silky ears of old Rowdy, who was upreared against his saddle skirts. The sudden transition from unrestrained savagery to trusting friendliness was almost unbelievable.

When, soon afterward, I drove past the prison-farm office, the guard idling on the gallery hailed me.

"Some boy made a break while yo' was down there?" he asked. "I heard dogs talkin'."

"No," I answered, making no further explanation.

Then, just as I turned onto the main thoroughfare, my ears caught a rising crescendo of "dog talk" coming from the edge of the clearing. The sound was unmistakable in its low rumbling undernote of savagery, and I wondered if during the previous exhibition, some convict, his desire for freedom overweighing his better judgment, had been impelled to make a break. If so, I hoped there was a good tall tree handy when the pack closed in.

A serial by one of your favorites, GEORGE OWEN BAXTER, in Next Week's Issue. Don't miss "TROUBLE'S MESSENGER."

STRANGE MINERAL IN UTAH

UTAH is a favored State in that it is the only place in the world where gilsonite is found in commercial quantities. This mineral, which is sometimes referred to as "liquid rubber," derives its name from Samuel H. Gilson, who in 1886 heard of a discovery of a new mineral, and went to Uintah County to make a study of it. He spent so much time studying this substance that the settlers dubbed it "gilsonite," the term under which it is now known commercially.

Gilsonite is a residue of petroleum, and is deposited in fissures of sandstone rock. The veins, which are often miles long and range in width from a mere streak to eighteen feet, are mined by means of shafts with drifts. Geologists claim that the petroleum of which gilsonite is the residue was deposited in the fissures millenniums ago.

Gilsonite is composed of 88.3-per-cent carbon, 9.96-per-cent hydrogen, 1.32-per-cent sulphur, and .10-per-cent ash. It is soluble in alcohol, carbon bisulphite, turpentine, heavy fats and oils. Although it is lacking in any elastic properties, varnish of unusual elasticity is made from it. It is used in the manufacture of fine paints and varnishes, electric insulators, phonograph records, telephone receivers, japanning material, and in ink for rotogravures used by magazines and newspapers. Lower grades are utilized in the manufacture of floor coverings, waterproof material, roofing papers, and the like. Great quantities are used as fillers for automobile tires, sometimes substituting for forty per cent of the rubber.

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Where Thunder Fell

By Raymond A. Berry

Author of "The One-way Stage," etc.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE DARK.

FROM the doorstep of their ranch cabin at the edge of the Colorado River bad lands, Jerry Prescott and Link Cassity watched the plateau sunset transform the stark immensities of the canyon country into a mystic realm of purple crags and indigo valleys. Both men were under thirty. Both were products of the desert. Prescott was curly haired and wiry, with eyes that sparkled when excited like sunlight on blue steel. Cassity was lean, almost cadaverous, with a humorous mouth chiseled into the granite of an otherwise austere face.

Prescott, the younger of the partners, broke the enchanted silence of sundown.

"Link, anything can happen down here."

Cassity shut his knife with a little sigh.

"Right you are, Jerry. And the best proof that anything can happen is that it already has. Mystery, murder, treasure hunts, strange disappearances—they've all been going on ever since the Almighty humped this country up and cut out the first slashes through it for the rivers to follow. We don't hear so much about it, even here on the fringe. The country's so big that you can lose or find anything in it."

"I know it," returned Prescott. "There's mystery to every square mile, and yet you and me are contented to work at building up a dinky cattle herd and to put up a few loads of hay every year while that saucy old dame, Adventure, is flirting with us from behind every mesa. It ain't right."

"But, according to all the books and old-timers, it's the way to become lead-

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ing citizens with a roll in the bank," argued Cassity. "You've heard Draper, Comfort, and a lot of other leading lights around here expound that theory a hundred times. Rolling stones gather no moss."

"Nor a setting hen any feathers!" scoffed Prescott. "Oh, well, we started in to try out this formula of labor and penury, and we'll follow it up until we've proved it one way or another. That is, we will unless something that we can't help happens to pry us loose. We wouldn't have spunk enough to do it ourselves."

Cassity laughed. "You sure sound hopeful and mournful when you say that. Itch is mighty bad in your feet to-day, ain't it? What happened to stir you up?"

"Nothing particular. I just got to thinking about the different old desert rats that have passed our place on their way into the rough country this summer. 'Dad' Jones, Muhlstien, Mullen, Stoddard, and Hanks, every one of them steppin' off like two-year-olds, and not one of them under sixty."

"Muhlstien's nearer a hundred," amended Clark. "Every year when he goes out I'm expecting to hear he's been found starved to death in some thicket of oak, with his whiskers caught in the brush."

"Muhlstien's an antique, right enough," agreed Prescott. "More than that, he's a fraud. Regular old fire eater, and yet he larrups along with about a yard of white whiskers floatin' over each shoulder like a flag of truce. And mighty queer the things they're after!"

"'Tis that. Muhlstien's after a canyon he found once and lost. Jones is tryin' to trace up a big vein of copper. Stoddard's searching for an old Indian village supposed to have lots of gold and precious stones in it. Nuts—all of them!"

"But happy nuts. None of them, though, are as big a mystery to me as Mat Colstrap."

Cassity chuckled. "Thought you'd get around to him. Is it him or his daughter that's the puzzle."

"Both," grinned Prescott. "I admit being hooked clean below the gills by Hazel. She's some girl. But even laying that aside, Colstrap's an enigma. He's got plenty of money, so he can't kid himself that he's hunting a needed fortune. He's not a mining man. I've heard him say so many a time."

"Do you suppose he's one of them fanatics interested in ruins?"

"Don't think so. And, yet, every summer for three years, he and Hazel go down to that inferno of canyons and rock deserts to hunt. And they hunt hard. You can tell it when they get back, lean as racers and brown as Indians. But what are they hunting for?"

"Ask me an easy one," advised Cassity. "Colstrap's one of these fellows that knows his rocks. Mebbe he's got an idea that the keystone to creation is down there somewhere, and he wants to measure it. Or again, mebbe he thinks that's the only way to keep you from hanging round Hazel summers. Or here's another suggestion! Mebbe he's hunting fossils. Baggin' bones is a big business nowadays."

Prescott snorted. "No, he's not hunting bones. Hazel told me of their finding about a carload of assorted fossils under an old waterfall where they'd washed in a million years ago, but her father wasn't interested. I'd follow 'em some time if it wasn't for being underhanded. It ain't right to whet folks' curiosity the way he does."

Pough! Pough!

Two reports disrupted the serenity of the evening and brought the partners to their feet.

Pough! Pough! Pough!

Three more shots followed, and their shrill detonations were tossed back and forth between the crags along the river

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in sinister echoings. From the fringe of cottonwoods next to the stream several tiny puffs of white smoke drifted upward, to be torn to pieces by the evening wind. As the partners stood silent, with ears straining, a high-pitched cry of anguish reached them. It was the sound of a human being, harassed and hurt, letting the bitterness of his anguish well from between tortured lips.

Springing into the cabin, Prescott snatched up two rifles and was outside again with a bound. As he handed one of the guns to Cassity, another series of reports blared from the creek bottom. The two men raced for the trees. As they ran, they could hear the sound of bodies lunging through the willows.

Just as they had reached the fringe of rank vegetation next to the water, still another shot rang out, followed by a wild crashing in the underbrush. Dashing for this point, they found an Indian lying face down, with his body partially supported by the branches and willow shoots crumpled beneath him. One of his knees had pressed deep into a clump of peppermint, and the spicy fragrance was exuding from the crushed leaves like incense.

With only the merest glance at the fallen man, the partners ran in the direction from which the shots had come. They could now hear the sound of retreating feet snapping dry twigs beneath them.

"Stop!" shouted Prescott.

There was no answer, and the partners opened fire blindly. They could hear their bullets whine and sing through the foliage, and they caught noises indicative of increased effort on the part of the fugitive. That was all.

Ahead, the valley narrowed between high bluffs. The mouth to this gorge was choked with brush, over which now hung the dusk of coming night. As soon as the murderer had reached this covert, Prescott and Cassity gave up the chase as useless and returned to the Indian. The latter had turned over and was now lying on his back, with the fingers of his right hand firmly clutching at a sodden place upon his left side, while the other arm was flung across his face.

Gently, Prescott removed the arm from the Indian's features. He was startled to find he was looking at the parchment-skinned countenance of a man he knew.

"Hunkup!" he ejaculated softly. "Link, what in the name of all that's unholy would any one want to hurt Hunkup for? I thought he was with Colstrap and Hazel. He usually is."

"Mebbe he was," answered Cassity. "Sure looks like he'd made some trip. Just run your eyes over his moccasins."

"Nothing but shreds," acknowledged Prescott; "which means he's been hard pressed for some distance or he would have stopped to patch them. See if his heart's moving, while I get some water in my hat. Man, isn't that hair a sight?"

Cassity nodded. "Blood in it from a scalp wound. Hurry with the water, and we'll get some down his throat. There's still a pulse."

Prying the set jaws apart, the partners forced a little water down the Indian's throat, then bathed his face. The eyelids twitched and there was a faint fluttering in the muscles of his larynx, then the flannel shirt upon his chest began to move slightly.

"Coming to," announced Prescott. "Man, I hope he can tell us who did this, and why! What d'ye think of the wound, Link?"

"I'm afraid it will be fatal," came the grave answer. "He's bleeding from his lungs. Looks like a bullet hit both. The poor old fellow's levis were about gone, too. He's had an awful experience. Look! He's still wearing the suspenders you gave him last Christmas."

Prescott nodded and bent over the

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Indian. "Hunkup," he called softly, "this is Jerry and Link."

Something akin to a smile of recognition passed over the furrowed features of the Indian. Then, after a moment, his eyelids opened slowly, revealing a pair of intelligent brown eyes, now filled with a somber blending of bitterness and fatalistic resignation.

At the sight of Prescott he tried to speak. The words were very low, and the young man dropped to his knees and inclined his head to hear.

"Me come from Colstrap. Long catchum Colstrap. Make plenty trouble. Young—white—squaw—send message. Hunkup bringum paper. Long's man chase Hunkup. Shoot Indian three times. Hunkup—die."

"Where's the paper, Hunkup?" cried Prescott.

"Hunkup no got," came the feeble answer.

"What happened to it?"

"Hunkup think Long's man going to catch. Hunkup eat paper."

Prescott groaned. "Too bad, old fellow, but you did the best you could. Of course, she wants help."

"Or ransom money," suggested Cassity. "You know 'Whet' Long likes cash. That robber is one of the items we failed to enumerate when talking over the interesting things down this way."

Hunkup shook his head. "No wantum money. Want white friend come quick. Plenty bad trouble."

"Where are they?" asked Prescott.

"Elbow Creek, near Splinter Fork," came the weak reply.

"Are you sure?" probed Prescott. "That's one of the most forlorn and rough spots in the whole country. What would any one want there?"

Hunkup seemed about to faint. Then, after water had been given him, he rallied and continued.

"Way back—many winters and summers ago—Hunkup's father's father, Chief Red Hawk, takes his braves and squaws—way down Elbow Creek. Hunt deer. Get pine nuts. Night come. Make camp. Stars shine. All quick big noise. Like thousand eagles high in air. Night bright like day. Indians heap scared. Birds scared. Deer run out of trees into wide place. Fish hide in mud at bottom of deep holes. Pine trees catch fire. Earth shake—— Thunder fell!"

"What did the Indians do?" demanded Cassity, feeling the drama of Hunkup's story.

"Indians leave place quick. Scared of thunder spirits. Colstrap, him hunt thunder medicine."

Abruptly, the Indian stopped speaking. His hands fell away from his chest and a look of peaceful dignity enveloped his gaunt body like some invisible mantle sent from beyond by the spirits of his fathers.

"Dead," pronounced Cassity, and the partners stared at each other across the still form.

"If he had lived, he could probably have told us the best route down there," exclaimed Prescott. "Going it blind will be hard."

"It will take a week at best," added Cassity. "No matter how fast we push the pack animals."

"A week!" ejaculated Prescott. "A week with Hazel and her father in the hands of Long! What does that cutthroat want if not money?"

"He does want money," Cassity assured him. "Don't you ever think he doesn't. The only thing with him now is how to get the most of it. Probably he wants to get Colstrap and the girl to some safer spot before starting negotiations. And again, mebbe, there isn't a thing to what Hunkup said. One or two of his wounds were several days old. He may have been delirious. That talk of his about thunder falling sounded flighty."

"But there was some one mighty real

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after him. His being killed wasn't any hallucination."

"N-o. That's true."

"Anyhow," Prescott went on. "I've got to go."

"Guess we have," agreed Cassity; "but the whole business is going to be pretty stale by the time we get there. It must be a week back since Hunkup started out. Seven more days for us to get in and you have a fortnight. No telling where Long's bunch will be by then."

"We're not going to take any week getting there!" retorted Prescott.

Cassity appeared puzzled. "How you going to get around it?"

"By raft. There's enough water in Stirrup Creek since these big rains to float us down to the Big Riley."

"And after that all we've got to do is to float down the Big Riley to where Elbow Creek empties into it and then work back up to Splinter Creek! That's simple if one's tired of living and has got a big life-insurance policy he wants to leave to some one. But I still enjoy my hot cakes very much and I haven't any policy."

Prescott smiled. "We can do it, Link. Water's high enough to cover the big boulders."

"It never has been done."

"No one ever tried."

"Yes, they have. Three or four parties took a whirl at it—and never came back to make a report. Besides, you haven't a boat. It would take as long to get one as to make the overland trip."

"Don't want any boat. That was the sort of contraption those other fellows used. What we want is a raft—one that you can't punch a hole in, and that you can repair with a cottonwood pole if necessary. We won't even need to go into town for provisions. In the morning I'll go down the creek a ways to that stand of dead timber and start getting out some good raft logs. While I'm doing that, you can shoot a deer and dress a quarter for us to take along. There's lots of biscuit dust in the house and plenty of sugar and salt."

"We can get plenty to eat all right enough," acquiesced Cassity. "There's some smoked bacon we can take along, too. We'd just as well eat while we're on the hallelujah trail. How about Hunkup? Shall we notify the sheriff?"

"We can't. It would lose us two days if we did. We'll have to bury him and notify the sheriff when we get back. He'll understand when we explain matters."

"We could leave a note," mused Cassity, "but some one else might come along and read it. Shall we bury Hunkup to-night?"

"Let's take him up to the cabin and leave him until morning. Like you say, some one could happen by that we could turn him over to. He'll be all right in the lean-to for to-night."

After Hunkup's gaunt form had been laid away with a blanket over it, two sober men prepared and ate a silent supper, then went about the business of putting their guns in shape and selecting equipment for the coming trip. It was nearing ten o'clock when Cassity glanced up from work on his rifle sight.

"There's that coyote out on the knoll calling us names again," he said.

Yip—yip—ya-hee-ee—— The lonely, quavering cry drifted in at an open window, carrying a strong suggestion of lupine scorn for the ways of man.

"Funny that Joe isn't barking back," Cassity continued. "He usually foams at the mouth after he's listened to that coyote read his pedigree for a few minutes."

"That's right. Joe hasn't let out a yip since we came inside. Was he here then?"

"Sure. I almost stepped on him when we were taking Hunkup in at the lean-to door."

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"I never put him out any scraps. Guess——"

Cassity, who was sitting close to the lamp, suddenly leaned forward and blew it out. Instantly the room was filled with a breathless darkness. Listening with painful intentness, Prescott imagined he heard a faint rustling outside—a rustling that was lost in the derisive howling of the coyote upon the knoll. There was a movement close at hand and Prescott felt his taut nerves jerk until he realized that it must be Cassity. Just then his partner's hand touched his.

"What is it? What made you blow out the light?" whispered Prescott.

"Something at the window," Cassity replied softly. "I couldn't see plain, but I believe it was a man with a gun. Anyhow, I wasn't taking chances. Get your revolver. We'll look round a bit."

Gently they let the door swing open and stared out into the starlight. Nothing unfamiliar met their gaze, and after an instant, they stepped outside, being careful to keep in the shadow of the wall. Silently they edged around the corner where, with a queer start, Prescott realized that the door was open. They had shut it, he knew, for he distinctly remembered turning the button that held it himself.

With ready guns the partners stepped across the shadowed threshold. Inside they stood for a minute listening. It was still—still as a tomb at midnight.

Prescott struck a match, and as the light flared up, an exclamation of dismay escaped his lips. The blanket had been jerked from Hunkup's body and the clothing torn from his limbs. On the floor lay the dog, Joe—dead.

Stepping across the animal, Prescott bent over Hunkup for a closer scrutiny.

"Whoever it was, he was looking for something," observed Cassity. "See! Every one of the linings in vest, coat, and trousers have been ripped out!"

"The only thing that any one could expect to find on Hunkup would be a message," answered Prescott. "This must be the fiend who shot him come to find the paper if it was still on him."

"Reckon you're right, and that when he didn't find it, he was ready to take pot shots at you and me. Thoroughgoing cuss, isn't he?" remarked Cassity.

"You've said it! Long sure is going to a lot of trouble to keep the news of his kidnaping exploit from leaking out. There must be a lot at stake—something more than we understand at present."

"Look at Joe," interposed Cassity. "He's been strangled. The lad that could wrap his fingers around that Airedale's neck and squeeze the life out of him without his getting out one growl, was no weakling. I'm not craving to have him grab me."

"If your old Joe would ever have barked when there was a real reason, this would never have happened to him. But that's the way he always was—would bay his fool head off at the moon or a coyote, and tackle anything walking on two legs without a sound."

"He always figured on the lad he jumped on making the noise," replied Cassity, "but this time it didn't work that way. D'ye suppose the villain will call again?"

"Doubt it. But if he does, we'll plan to give him a warm reception."

"I'm even in favor of sittin' up to keep the cabin cozy for him."

"But we won't need a light," protested Prescott.

"Not on your life! Not before the old haymaker comes up in the morning—and we won't need coffee to keep us awake neither."

CHAPTER II.

ALL ABOARD!

WHILE the valley was still filled with the pearl dawn light, the partners removed Hunkup from the lean-to and carried his body up to the little knoll from which the coyote had barked the

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night before. Anxious though Prescott was to get started, they dug the grave deep and covered it with rocks, after which they put up a crude headstone with his name and the date of his death.

When this was done, Prescott took an ax and a rifle with him to the river, where he cut poles for a raft. Meanwhile, Cassity began the job of sorting and moving their provisions to the stream. By noon, the raft was completed. All their guns except their revolvers were wrapped in canvas and lashed to the center of the raft along with the rest of the provisions. Prescott surveyed the finished job with satisfaction.

"She floats like a cork, Link, and you've got the stuff tied on so you couldn't pry it loose with a crowbar."

"It'll need to be that way by the time we've coasted down a few slick rapids and over a waterfall or two. Believe me, Jerry, clinging onto the back of a wild horse would be a cinch compared to riding the hurricane deck of this Stirrup Creek schooner!"

"That's the name for it," laughed Prescott. *"The Stirrup Creek Schooner.* Bust a bottle of catsup over her nose and we'll christen her."

"We'll bust our own noses on the deck if we're not careful," came the glum reply. "Say when you're ready to start."

Prescott clutched one of the long, slim saplings which he had provided for poles. "Ready now," he called. "Cut her loose!"

The raft shook when the current seized it and the bottom grated once or twice on rocks, after which Prescott poled them into deeper water.

Southwest of them the gorge of the first canyon grew like Jack's bean stalk from a low line of purple bluffs into a sizable slit through the old plateau. Water gurgled and chuckled musically about the raft, which dipped and lifted like a swallow. Tiny waves from muddy water rushed across it, and a stiff wind blew into their faces from downstream. Pinion jays peered at them from the pines along the bluff or circled overhead in flocks, filling the air with their raucous screaming.

Prescott looked at his partner and grinned. "This has got a horse beat seven ways for Sunday, Link. We're gettin' somewhere!"

Cassity smiled faintly. "Y' bet, we're goin' somewhere. What I want you to tell me is where? Look out! Keep your eyes on the steering. We danged near hit a rock then."

An hour later they left this gorge and traveled a more placid stretch of stream. Ahead of them was a tiny island, and as Prescott debated which would be the better side on which to pass, he saw a man standing upright on a log of driftwood, waving a shirt. An exclamation of annoyance escaped the oarsman as he poled his raft toward a sand spit at the lower end of the island.

"Guess we'll have to see what's the matter," he called to Cassity. "Can't hardly give him the go by."

The latter nodded agreement, and a moment later they were grounded, while the shirt waver ran out to meet them. He was a big man, but thin.

"Look at his red beard!" exclaimed Cassity. "Bet it hasn't been cut for two months."

"It's been longer than that since he washed," said Prescott in a low tone.

"Gosh, fellers," exclaimed the stranger, as he lunged up to the side of the boat, "I sure am tickled pink to see you!"

"How come you're roosting out here in the middle of the stream?" demanded Prescott.

"Well, I sure had a run of grief that's more than any hombre deserves. Tied my boat up here last night and had supper. I was so tuckered out that I went to bed without pullin' it up on

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shore like I'd ought to have done, an' durin' the night one of them cussed pieces of driftwood came along an' scraped her loose. Left me with nothin' but my hands and a revolver."

Prescott's eyes narrowed. "Haven't you got any bedding roll on shore with you? Most folks like blankets to sleep in."

Again the deprecating laugh rang out. "I know most folks feel that way. I like to sleep in 'em myself, but I was so danged tired last night that after I'd et my supper an' stowed my dishes back in the boat, I thought I'd stretch out an' smoke a pipe o' terbaccer before spreadin' out my beddin'. Instead, I went to sleep. Gosh, I don't know what I'd done if you fellers hadn't come along."

"You could have swum ashore and walked in to the settlements, couldn't you?" demanded Cassity.

"Can't swim a stroke."

"What's your name?" questioned Prescott.

"Bangor."

"You could have got hold of a stick of driftwood, couldn't you, and have let it float you to shore?" probed the younger partner.

"I hadn't thought of that. Anyhow, there ain't nothin' on this baby island that ain't water-logged. Maybe after a while I'd have thought of somethin' like you're suggestin', but up till now I was too flustered. Gosh, I'm glad you came along!" As he talked, he picked up a seasoned stick of wood the size of a man's wrist and broke it with his two hands as though it had been a match.

His attention thus called to them, Prescott looked closer at the man's hands. They were enormous, wide across the palm and thick, with heavy fingers that suggested so many sturdy roots projecting from a tough old stump.

"Just starting out on your trip, I suppose," Prescott observed casually.

Bangor started to speak, then stopped suddenly, while a calculating look came into his eyes. One hand softly felt his beard.

"Nope, I've been out some spell," he said quietly.

"Coming up the river, then?" quizzed Prescott, still guileless.

"Nope, not that either. I reckon you fellers know a body couldn't pole a boat up this creek, nor the one it runs into."

"Well, then, just what have you been doing?"

"Gosh, fellers, I hate to tell that, but I reckon I'm owin' it to you, as long as I'm dependin' on you for help. Fact is, I've been prospectin' along here. I work back into the rough country a ways each day, then move the boat down a little farther. Had to come to the river for water anyway, so it was just as cheap to have the boat to move things."

"I see. And you thought there was some likely looking stuff on this island, so you poled your boat out to it during flood water."

Bangor looked hurt. "Nope. I've got more sense than that; but it was this way. Yesterday, some tough-lookin' fellers trailed past here and went up cross-country. They looked my outfit over mighty close and I was afraid they'd call on me after dark, so I came out here, thinkin' it would be safer."

Prescott nodded. "I suppose you were prospecting for gold?"

"You know that there ain't no gold here as well as I do," protested Bangor. "I was lookin' for oil. I've got a lot of knowledge of rock formations, even if I do look kinda dumb. This is oil country down here, an' some time when people get hard enough up for petroleum, this will be developed. I figger on pickin' out the likeliest piece of it an' squattin' on it for a homestead."

"It's never been surveyed," put in Cassity.

"What of that? I can squat on it just the same. Or, again, mebbe I can

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get some money fellers interested in it."

"Well," broke in Prescott, "we're in a hurry. Climb aboard and we'll pole you over to the shore. Link, get him out a little grub and a canteen. With that he can hoof it into town."

Bangor looked pathetic. "That's a long trip," he protested, "an' I ain't familiar with the trail across the hills."

Prescott's face hardened. "Sorry, old-timer, but there isn't time for us to do anything else."

"Where you goin'?"

"Down the Big Riley."

Bangor whistled. "I've been told that's never been did successful. Ain't you bitin' off quite a chew?"

"Probably," conceded Prescott, "but that's where we're going, so you can see you'd just as well take a cross-country hike as to sign aboard this ship."

"I see," said Bangor gravely. "Yep, them's mighty hard choices you give a feller."

"I haven't given you a choice," replied Prescott quickly. "All I was doing was explaining why it would be impossible for us to take you with us."

"Then what am I to do? I hurt my leg slippin' off a log. I ain't goin' to be in no condition to travel much, mebbe for weeks."

"What's hurt about it?"

"Ankle twisted, I reckon."

"I didn't notice you limp when you came over to talk to us."

"Didn't you? Mebbe you wasn't noticin', an' again mebbe I didn't show it much for a minute. I was plumb excited at seein' you show up, an' a feller can forget quite a bit when excited that way."

"Let's see your ankle."

Bangor sat down and, turning up one leg of his levis, rolled down a sock. "There you are," he said, pointing to an enlarged ankle. "You can see yourself that it's twice as big as it had ought to be. An' how am I goin' to hike with a thing like that? For any distance, I mean."

Prescott frowned as he turned to his partner. "Link," he demanded, "what are we going to do? We can't stop here?"

"Maybe we could leave enough provisions to last Bangor till he's able to travel," suggested Cassity.

"Fellers," pleaded Bangor, "I don't want to be left alone in this God-forsaken country in this condition. Of course, you can leave me if you want to, but it ain't right. You'll never come back this way, an' if everything don't go right with my leg, I'll mebbe stay right here by myself till I croak. Let me go along."

The partners exchanged questioning glances.

"Shall we?" asked Prescott.

"You're captain of this expedition. What you say goes," grinned Cassity.

"I suppose you realize that one more on this raft will make it harder to navigate," Prescott said to Bangor.

The lame man nodded. "Yep, I'll admit it will make some difference, but I ain't such a bad riverman, an' I figger I'll help more than I hurt."

"There'll be an overland hike in the end, anyhow. We can never get out on a raft."

"Sure, I understand that, too; but I ain't goin' to worry about that till the time comes. I don't want to be left alone."

"Can you cook?" quizzed Cassity.

Bangor grinned. "Can I cook? Say, honest, I can cook so's a man with no teeth an' a bad stomach will gain a pound a day. I like to cook. Let me go along an' you won't have no trouble about grub an' dishes at all."

"That," observed Cassity, "is a point in favor of takin' him, Jerry. Looks as though, takin' everything into consideration, it might not be a bad thing to let him trail along. We can hardly leave a good cook to go to pot, scarce-

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as they are. They ought to be conserved like Big Horn sheep or elk."

"All right, Bangor, you can come along," acquiesced Prescott slowly.

"And may Heaven help you if you've lied about the cookin'," amended Cassity. "I won't."

"I can cook," reaffirmed Bangor confidently. "There's a lot of things I can't do, but cookin's not one of them."

"Know anything about the river below here?" broke in Prescott.

"I've heard say there was some mighty bad rapids down below about fifteen miles. Some Indians told me that. I don't know nothin' first-hand, though."

"Well, you will in a few hours," assured Prescott, looking at his watch. "We'll be shootin' them long before dark. Climb aboard! The *Stirrup Creek Schooner* is about to heave anchor. Take one of those paddles and get at the back to help Cassity steer. I'll stay up front and pole us away from the rocks."

"I'm ready," affirmed Bangor. "Just wait till I nip off a chew o' eatin' terbaccer."

CHAPTER III.

ALL ASHORE!

FOR two hours the three men watched the valley narrow toward the purple maw of a deep canyon. The growth of cottonwoods and willows dwindled to a slender fringe of green, while the current pulled at the raft with ever-increasing strength. Soon, sheer beetling walls shut out all but a ribbon of sky—and they were in the gorge proper.

Ahead, the walls contracted more and more until the confined waters bulged into a wave-wrinkled green bow, banded at either edge with a lather of white water, through which jutted fang-toothed rocks, made more sinister by the flying foam that incased them.

Prescott motioned the men at the rear to hold the raft into a position as near the crest of the central arch of waters as possible. As they got deeper into the canyon's gullet, waves appeared on this slope—waves that fell backward on the raft as it shot through them. The current took on huge swells, down which the raft shot as though it would surely splinter its end on the bed rock at the bottom of the river. Following these descents were corresponding swoops upward, and all the time there was a vast roaring and rumble in their ears. Prescott saw strange side gorges flash past—gorges with huge paws of mad water reaching into their mouths or slapping blindly against glistening cliffs.

Then, as his senses reeled at the bewildering succession of gyrations, leaps, and spins, he heard a shout. Looking around, he was just in time to see Cassity's head and arms disappear in a wild welter of water. On his side of the raft, Bangor was staring after the sinking man as though paralyzed.

"Link!" shouted Prescott. But he might as well have whispered for all the carrying power of human lungs in such an inferno of noise.

A quarter of a mile more of bucking, plunging, whirling followed, after which the raft reached comparatively quiet water where Prescott and Bangor were able to work it to shore.

"How did Cassity happen to go off?" Prescott asked the minute he could make himself heard.

"Dunno. I never turned round till he was overboard. Reckon, though, it was the same wave that nearly got me. I come awful near to lettin' loose. I sure did."

There was something heartless in the callous manner of Bangor, and Prescott felt an unreasoning wrath rising within him. But it was no time for words, and he ordered Bangor to tie the raft to an upthrust rock.

"We'll go along the shore and look for him," Prescott said briefly.

Bangor hung back. "There ain't no

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use," he objected. "Nobody could live in there. I'll just stay here and tighten up the ropes on the pervisions."

Prescott sensed an undercurrent of insolence in the man's words—as though the loss of Cassity had removed the necessity of his taking orders.

"See here, Bangor," the younger man snapped, "you came along here with the understanding that you'd fall in with our plans. As long as you're with us, you'll do as we say. That was the bargain. I want you to come along with me, and we'll take a rope. He might be alive, you know."

"It's all danged foolishness——" Bangor stopped short as he met Prescott's bleak stare. "Better get out a gun, hadn't I?" he ended.

"No, you hadn't," Prescott clipped. "We haven't time to wait. Come on!"

They had traveled some distance along the rough bank when Prescott caught sight of Cassity lying upon a boulder near the center of the stream, just below the rapids. Only his head and shoulders were above the water, and he did not stir in answer to Prescott's shouts. Bangor chewed his tobacco and looked on with an air of indifference.

"Dead," he observed, "or soon will be. Nothin' can keep him from bein' washed off there."

"I'm goin' to swim out to him," Prescott retorted, kicking off his shoes. "When I get there, throw the rope. I'll tie it about Cassity. You can haul him to shore."

Bangor nodded his understanding of the situation and coiled the rope ready to cast. Going to a point some fifty feet above his objective, Prescott made his way out on a spray-wet slab of stone and dived in. Two or three minutes of battling the swift current followed, and then he was clutching at the slick stone on the downstream end of the rock supporting Cassity. At this end, the rock projected several feet above the current. Twice he thought he was going to be able to pull himself on top, only to have his fingers slip on the slimy surface, after which he fell back into the comparative quiet of the eddy below the boulder. The effort to swim back to his former position and renew the struggle to get out was wearying. The third time, Prescott decided, was his last real chance. Putting all his strength and faculties to work as he never had before, he fought his way slowly up, clinging with fingers and toes to every irregularity in the surface. Yet, despite everything, he felt himself beginning to slip. If he went back this time, it would be the last of both himself and his friend—to say nothing of Hazel.

Managing somehow to stay his backward slip for a moment, he shouted, "Link! Link! Link!"

At the third call, he thought the still form on the upper end of the boulder stirred. At the next shout Cassity moved, and after a second, raised his head, then let it drop back.

The water racing around the side of the rock pulled at Prescott's legs and his fingers were torn from the desperate effort to claw a hold. Inwardly he groaned as Cassity dropped back upon the rock. Then he renewed his wild shouting.

"Link! Link! Help! I'm sinking!"

That cry for aid aroused Cassity as nothing else could have done. Again he lifted his head, and with eyes still vacant stared toward Prescott. Then, as the latter still clung and prayed, the dazed expression left Cassity's face and it took on a look of intelligent understanding.

"Hold on, Jerry," he called above the churn of the water. "I'll get you!"

After that, Prescott supported himself on aching arms while Cassity inched his way along the rock until he could reach a hand down to him. With Cassity pulling, he was able to make the top, where the two huddled together on the boulder.

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"How did you get here?" Cassity demanded. "Did the raft tip over?"

"No," panted Prescott, "it's tied up down below. Bangor and I came back to hunt for you. He's over on the shore with a rope. I'll motion him to throw it over to us."

The two looked toward the shore, and Prescott signaled his desires. Bangor, however, merely grinned and thumbed his nose at them. His action sent a cold chill down the younger man's spine.

"I could have told you that," growled Cassity. "The fellow knocked me off that raft. What d'ye suppose he'll do next? Go off and leave us?"

Bangor soon answered this question by moving leisurely among the rocks on the shore until he had selected an armful of fist-sized boulders. As comprehension came to the doomed men, they stared at one another in horror.

"Goin' to try to knock us off as if we were a couple of clay pigeons!" ejaculated Cassity.

As he spoke, a rock cracked in two on the side of the boulder just below them. The next went high, while the third, a smaller one, struck Prescott in the side. The pain made him writhe, but he judged there were no ribs broken. Bangor failed to score another hit with his first load and went in search of more ammunition. Fascinated, the partners watched him weighing, selecting, or discarding the various stones.

"We've got to get as far apart as we can before he starts pitching again," Prescott observed. "That'll give us a chance to move our bodies one way or another."

"Good idea. Maybe that way we can hold him off until dark and then swim ashore," agreed Cassity. "Right now, though, I feel as though I couldn't make it."

"Neither could I," Prescott responded, feeling his bruised side. "Look out! Here comes a strike!"

Cassity flattened out on the rock and a stone whizzed over his head. Others struck around them, but by clever dodging they avoided being hit. Five times Bangor went after rocks and, meanwhile, the shadows deepened. Then Prescott realized that Bangor was not renewing his attack as quickly as formerly, and indeed had disappeared.

"Link," he exclaimed, "I bet that fellow's gone after a gun!"

"He can't see us in the dark," Cassity said consolingly.

"No, but he can build a fire out of driftwood and pick us off by the light."

"That's so, too. But I doubt if we can make it to shore yet. I'm still a little wabbly from the hammering I got and bein' cramped on this boulder isn't doin' us any good."

Out of the east a blotch of darker gloom appeared. As it grew closer they could see it was a huge tree trunk with a great mass of roots bobbing in the air. Prescott pointed to it.

"Let's try to make that tree, Link, and hold on till we get a little way below where the raft is tied. It's rather still water there, and I believe we can make it to land. Maybe we could get back to the raft and get guns ourselves before Bangor misses us."

"Worth trying," chattered Cassity. "Come on before I get so cold I can't swim."

"Wait till the roots go past," warned Prescott.

A minute later the two rose, dripping, beside the big tree. Paddling till their hands were on convenient limbs, they drifted swiftly downstream. Two or three minutes later a rifle cracked behind them.

Cassity chuckled. "Bangor's shootin' at the rock. Can't tell whether we're on it or not. Looks like your scheme might work. We didn't shove off a bit too quick, either."

"Right here," announced Prescott a minute later, "is where we've got to try for shore."

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"Hearin' the boom of that falls down below, don't make me any less willin'," returned Cassity. "Let's go."

Soon after their feet struck bottom along a gravel bar, and Prescott located the raft. The supplies had been opened and scattered upon the shore so that it took but a few minutes for Cassity to locate a rifle and his partner to find a revolver. The chill of the night wind sweeping through the canyon drove cold into their very marrows.

"Hurry up!" urged Cassity. "Let's get that rooster so we can build a fire and dry off."

"I need shoes as badly as anything," Prescott whispered, as they slipped through the gloom.

Soon, flames shone ahead of them.

"He's built a fire just as we said he would," whispered Cassity. "Probably he thinks we've slid down on the far side of the rock and when he gets a big enough blaze he can see our arms or heads."

"Wish he'd come out where we could see him," muttered Prescott.

"There he is."

Bangor appeared in the firelight, but it was at an unexpected point, and before either of the partners could draw a bead on him he vanished into the shadows again.

"Blazes!" growled Cassity. "It's like stalkin' a weasel!"

"What became of that sore leg?" whispered Prescott. "Bangor moved natural enough just now and he did on shore, while he was throwing at us."

"That's right, he did. We'll ask him when we've captured him. Suppose he'll say it was the excitement again?"

Cassity nearly strangled in his effort to suppress a chuckle as Bangor reappeared. This time the ungrateful fellow walked up to the fire and threw an armful of wood upon it. Through the screening cottonwoods they could see his face, red in the firelight, as he stared toward the river with the cocked rifle in his hand. As they watched, a sudden heightening of the blaze illuminated the stream, bringing the rock into relief. Instantly a vicious look crossed Bangor's countenance and he flung the rifle to his shoulder. Then, when the firelight failed to reveal anything but more shadows, he lowered it with a curse and glanced uneasily around.

"Drop that gun!" ordered Cassity sharply.

Instead of obeying, Bangor leaped back and started to jerk the weapon upward. A spurt of flame came from Cassity's rifle and Bangor toppled over. Breaking through the brush, Prescott and his partner ran toward him.

"Can't find any wound," Cassity stated, after his search had explored stomach, lungs, chest, and head. "Still, he's unconscious, and he's not the kind of man to faint from fright."

Prescott took a brand from the fire and held it closer. "What's that on the side of his head—the other side—just above the ear?"

Cassity looked at the place indicated and found where a bullet had barely grazed the temple. "Isn't that heck?" he asked bitterly. "Why couldn't I have hit him in some vital spot? Now we're saddled with the curse for the rest of the trip."

"Looks like it," Prescott agreed soberly; "we can hardly kill him in cold blood."

"How about camping here to-night?" asked Cassity. "There's a lot of wood close by, and the fire's goin' good. If you'll tie Bangor up, I'll chase down an' get some stuff to start supper with."

Five minutes later when Cassity reappeared with his arms full of supplies, Bangor was still dead to the world.

"That's the stuff!" beamed Cassity. "I was hopin' I'd find him that way. I'll fix him."

Running down to the creek he scooped up a bucket of water and threw the contents over their captive's head and

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shoulders. A second later Bangor twitched nervously and he groaned. After that his eyes opened and he stared wildly about.

"Hello, cookee. Ready to start supper?" greeted Cassity.

The big man made an effort to sit up and for the first time realized that he was bound. Looking down, Prescott saw the fellow's great hands working in the mold. Thick sticks cracked like chips between his fingers and his nails dug into the soil like the teeth of a spring-tooth harrow. His lips curved back, but no sound escaped them.

"Let's drag him over a little closer to the fire where we can be more comfortable while we talk to him," suggested Cassity. "He seems self-conscious and tongue-tied now, but he'll get over that. There. That's better. Drop him on that damp spot while we perch on this log and toast our backs. Now, Bangor, old sport, tell us all about everything."

CHAPTER IV.

BANGOR THINKS TWICE.

FAR from complying with this invitation, the captive snarled:

"I'll tell you nothin'."

"Oh, come now, of course you will," cajoled Cassity. "You're with old acquaintances now and the thing for you to do is to get the whole nasty business off your chest so you can sleep better. We know you can explain everything. You're a wonderful explainer, Bangor. The best either of us ever saw. Didn't you explain all about being on that island to the queen's taste? And when we wanted to put you ashore, didn't you explain how it was impossible for you to travel? Of course you did, and you could produce evidence to boot. How about the leg, anyhow, Bangor? Did you trip over another rock or log and spring it back into place again?"

"Go ahead and play smart," snapped Bangor. "That's all the good it'll do you. I said I'd tell nothin' an' that's what I meant."

"You don't know what you'll do, old-timer," Cassity answered pleasantly. "You might get by with playin' sheep here with Jerry, but not me. I've got a lot of mean curiosity in my disposition. Maybe you wouldn't think so from lookin' at me, but appearances are deceivin'. You've forfeited the right to be treated like an ordinary human being, Bangor, and I am going to find out what's in the back of that thick skull of yours, if I have to stage a Spanish inquisition out here. First, though, while you're mullin' over what I've said, we'll take a look at that ankle."

Reaching down, Cassity quickly unlaced the shoe and slipped it from Bangor's foot.

"Still big," he commented. "Let's see how sensitive it is. Uh-huh! Just as I thought. It's a permanent enlargement. Not got a thing to do with walkin', but it made a good stall. Now just exactly what was your reason for tryin' to make away with us?"

Bangor merely glared at them.

"Still sulky, eh?" asked Cassity. "All right. I'll fix that."

Getting to his feet, he went to the creek for another bucket of water. Prescott followed him.

"What are you going to do, Link?"

Cassity's voice carried a cold finality as he said:

"I'm goin' to make him talk, Jerry. He forced his society upon us and then planned to make away with us. Under the circumstances and in the ticklish place we're in, I think we'd be justified in shooting him. But if he does go farther with us, he's going to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth concerning the entire business. That's mighty small pay for risking our lives by having him along. He makes the boat harder to navigate and he's as dangerous a prisoner to have along as a new-caught gorilla."

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Prescott had seen his partner in this deadly mood before. Also, he felt the justice of the argument. If he interfered with Cassity at this time, their partnership would surely be broken, and he certainly desired to be at peace with his friend. Moreover, Bangor deserved punishment, and this conflict of wills would be worth watching. Despite what Cassity had said about an inquisition, Prescott felt certain that the major part of the torture would be mental.

Striding back to the fire, Cassity set down the bucket.

"Come on, Jerry, let's haul this hunk of meanness back closer to the creek," he suggested.

"Whatcha doin' that for?" demanded Bangor. "Don't you know them rocks hurt?"

"They're not any harder than the ones you threw at us," came the unsympathetic answer. "There, that's good."

Picking up the bucket, Cassity once more doused the contents over Bangor. Then going to the creek, he repeated the operation until every shred of the prisoner's clothing was saturated. From up canyon the breeze blew stronger and cut against the men with an edge sharpened by the menace of coming frost.

"Come on, Jerry," Cassity said, "let's get back to the fire and get the java boilin'."

"You ain't goin' to leave me out in this breeze this way, are you?" whined Bangor. "Surely no white man would do that."

"I'm not tryin' to be white with you," Cassity answered grimly. "I'm peelin' off my veneer of civilization for the present an' actin' like a savage as far as you're concerned, Bangor. You're going to stay right here till you get ready to talk."

"But I'm freezing."

"Go ahead and freeze. You didn't worry about how cold we were out on that rock."

"Maybe trying to knock us off was his idea of being merciful," suggested Prescott.

"Maybe," admitted Cassity; "anyway, I'm willin' to own he gave us plenty of exercise. Bangor can get his shiverin'. Probably in a couple of hours he'll work up a temperature."

Before the partners had been at the fire fifteen minutes Bangor began to call to them.

"Don't pay any attention to him," admonished Cassity. "If we answer quick, he'll figure we're too anxious and hedge some more. Just let him lie there and curse, pray, or shiver till he figures that we're actually going to let him freeze. Then when we do go to him, he'll talk all right."

As Prescott poured the coffee, Bangor begged, "Give me somethin' to eat. I'm starvin'."

"There's no use feedin' a freezin' man," drawled Cassity. "It'd be a waste of grub here, so far from the source of supply. Better save it for those that can use it longer."

Another quarter of an hour of raving by Bangor and the enjoyment of a good supper by the partners followed. Neither man paid the slightest attention to the captive, but when the last cup of coffee had been drunk, Cassity stood up, stretched, then reached for the water bucket.

"Guess I'll go down and soak Bangor up again," he drawled. "He's most likely dried up by now and goin' to staves."

"Don't!" howled Bangor. "Don't you throw any more water on me! I can't stand it. Set that bucket down again. I'll talk."

Cassity sloshed the water in his bucket. "You don't have to talk—at least not to-night, you don't. Jerry and I would just as soon let you think it over till mornin'. Wouldn't you rather be wet up again and left alone for about eight hours?"

"No!" roared Bangor. "If you throw

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any more of that on me, I'll lose my mind. Quit shakin' it. I can't stand it."

"Sure you want to talk?"

"I want to do anything that will give me a chance to get warm."

Cassity stepped over and untied the rope about the trussed man's legs.

"Get up," he directed, "and walk around till your blood starts circulatin'. Don't trouble to go far. Just mill around in a circle. And don't try running."

"Think I want to be left alone in this God-forsaken wilderness with nothin' to eat, no place to go, an' my hands tied behind my back?"

"I don't know what you want," retorted Cassity, "nor how you reason. I'm not even sure you would be alone if I left you here. And I think there's enough monkey about you so that you could snap those ropes, given a little time, and a sharp rock. Now, mush over to the fire! When you get through talkin', there'll be eats and coffee—providin' you come clean."

Bangor backed against the blaze until the steam rose in a cloud from his sodden garments.

"Man, but that feels good!" he muttered. "Go ahead and ask questions. I'll tell anything."

"That's what I'm afraid of," replied Cassity, "and what I want is the truth. First, what was your spite at us? Why did you want to do away with us?"

Bangor's eyes rolled until they showed white in the firelight. "I was afraid you'd make away with me if I didn't."

"What could put any such crazy idea into your head?"

Bangor gulped. "You see, it's this way. You never told me a thing about your plans—acted as mysterious as boardin'-house hash. You're goin' into one of the wildest parts of the bad lands by raft an' at a time of year when there's apt to be a flood come along an' wash you into kingdom come any minute. Who'd make a trip like that but fellers who was plumb desperate?"

Cassity glanced at Prescott. "How's that for class?" he asked admiringly. "Go on, Ananias, and finish your story."

Bangor pulled his matted beard. "I dunno whatcha mean callin' me that name, but anyhow I figgered that I had got in with tough characters—more'n likely murderers—an' there wasn't enough provisions along to keep the three of us long, so——" Here Bangor paused dramatically.

"And you were afraid that after we had got you to do a lot of rough work for us we'd murder you and maybe eat you," finished Cassity. "Well, we'll drop that for a minute. Who are you workin' for?"

Bangor frowned. "How do you mean? Didn't I say I was prospectin'? A feller over at Green Bluff grubstaked me."

"I mean, who hired you to murder us?"

"Nobody hired me to."

"Maybe 'hired' isn't the word. Perhaps you're one of these fellows who do the dirty work just for the fun of it. Who's your master, if you like to put it that way?"

"I ain't got no master. You've got me all wrong. Hey, what are you goin' to do? Don't shoot!"

"I'm not going to shoot if you behave," replied Cassity. "Jerry, get that piece of rope and the water bucket and we'll take him down to the creek again. This time he'll stay till morning."

Bangor groaned. "I give in. Long can't be much worse than you fellers."

Cassity smiled. "Thought maybe you'd see the light. I've felt certain ever since you knocked me off the raft that you was the gent that did up Hunkup. Those hands of yours look like the ones that strangled our dog. Did Long send you out on a general mission of extermination?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Use words that an ordinary man can

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understand, Link," put in Prescott. "He don't get you. Cassity is trying to ask you if Long sent you out with orders to kill every one you ran into?"

"Nope, he didn't. But when he found that Hunkup had got away, he told me to kill him and keep the message from gettin' outside."

"He found out about the message, then?" Prescott asked anxiously.

"You bet! He always finds out what he wants to. All he had to do was get ready to hang Colstrap, and the girl told all he wanted to know."

"So when you crept into the lean-to of our cabin and couldn't find the message on him, you figured, of course, that we had it and got ready to do away with us?"

Bangor nodded. "Yep, that's it."

"Why didn't you try shooting us while we were getting ready to start?"

"I thought of that," Bangor admitted with amazing candor, "but you was too suspicious. I wanted to get you both at once, and before I could do that, you had your raft fixed. So when I seen you gettin' ready to start, I took a horse an' rode like heck to the river ahead of you an' swum out to that island. I figgered that you'd pick me up an' that I could knock you off before we got to the worst part of the stream. Then I'd hit out across country again for Long's camp. That's the truth, an' if you're goin' to kill me, do it quick!"

Cassity shook his head. "No, we can't do that after you've laid your cards on the table. Bangor, I'll have to say this for you—you're a smarter man than I thought you were. Not a half bad judge of character. You'd kill either of us without a qualm under similar circumstances, but you're bright enough to know that we couldn't do that to you."

"You're mistook about that," the prisoner retorted. "I certainly had plenty of qualms."

"What made you go on with the sneaking business then? There wasn't a thing to keep you from skipping out when you got as far as our ranch. You could even have told us about Long's plans and have done a real good turn for once."

Bangor shook his head, while a dejected, hangdog expression came over his face.

"Nope, I couldn't very well do that. You see, I'm wanted for murder on the 'outside.' Oh, I murdered the feller all right, but it was justified, an' done in hot blood. Now, if I leave Long, he'll let word of me leak out to the officers, an' I'm a goner."

"So you have to keep right on butchering folks to save your own worthless neck, do you?" demanded Prescott.

"Yep, that's it, I reckon; but you'd be surprised how much I think of this neck—even if it ain't all a neck could be. Long's got several fellers in his bunch that's in the same fix as I'm in."

"I suppose the box you're in bothers your conscience so you lie awake nights," observed Cassity, with more than a little sarcasm in his tones.

"Yessir, it sure does," answered Bangor earnestly. "I've worried about the thing a heap more'n anybody'd think. Laid awake lots of times when I should have been asleep. But I'm into wickedness so deep now that I'm scared to give myself up an' let the State hang me. I tell you fellers that a man's mighty backward about shuckin' off this life when he knows the old Nick's waitin' for him with a pitchfork heated ten times hotter than possible."

"Stop!" ordered Cassity. "Bangor, you've wasted your talents. You should have been either an actor or a revivalist preacher."

"What I want to know," Prescott broke in, "is what Long intends to do to Mr. Colstrap and his daughter?"

"I don't know that," the prisoner answered, "but it ain't likely to be very good."

"Do you know why he's holding

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them?" the younger partner asked again.

"Wants gold."

"How does he intend to get it without demanding ransom?"

"Long says Colstrap knows where there's something that would make a good many fortunes, and he intends to make him tell where it is."

"What is this thing that's worth so much money? A big vein of ore?"

Bangor nodded. "Yep, that's the very thing. Colstrap hadn't give it away when I left. Him and the girl said they didn't know where there was anything to make a fortune and was just looking for a place where the Indian said a meteor fell a long time back. Long thinks they're lyin', though. He'll make 'em tell."

"What do you think he'll do?" asked Prescott, his voice strained with anxiety.

Bangor shrugged. "I dunno, an' I ain't specially fond of thinkin' about it, neither. Long's done a lot of things that don't make pleasant tellin'. And that's a mighty pretty girl of Colstrap's, too."

"Where is Long camped?" Prescott demanded.

"When I left, he was right at the place where Elbow and Splinter Creek come together. Reckon he's still there unless he's found what he's after."

"How far are we from there now?" questioned Prescott.

"Not so far in a bee line, but a good ways about through the hills. But the best thing you can do is to turn round an' go back. If you're after Long, like I suppose you are, you need a dumbed sight bigger crowd than just you two."

"We'll be all right," said Prescott sharply. "To-morrow ought to put us into his camp."

Bangor's mouth sagged open. "Honest, you fellers ain't calcalatin' to ride that danged raft down the narrers below, are you?"

"We'd do it to-night if the moon was out," answered Prescott.

"But that's a regular terror of a rapids," protested Bangor. "I've looked over the edge in two or three places, an' I can tell you it's enough to make a man's hair stand on end. You can see the wreck of one boat up on the ledges thirty feet above the reg'lar stream level. Must have been one gosh-awful run of water that put it there. Looks like a fish skeleton now, hangin' up there with the keel for a backbone. Some of the ribs are missin' now an' the spine's splintered in a couple of places. Hear that!"

A shift in the wind brought noises from down canyon to their ears. Distinctly they could catch a sound like distant thunder or the roar of heavy artillery. It came in a steady, booming bass, pulsating, now high, now low, on the varying breeze. Bangor pointed to the stream.

"Creek's risin' now," he said laconically; "if she can do that now, what can she do when she gets higher? You've got to leave the creek."

Cassity yawned and stretched. "We're not usin' that word on this expedition. Jerry, what say we tie Bangor's legs and undo his arms while he eats a bit? Then we'll stow him away for the night. I'm tired."

"So am I," answered his partner; "but I'd rather sleep in shifts, if it's all the same to you."

"Don't like the idea of not having Bangor watched, eh? Well, it's all right with me if we keep an eye on him all the time, though he has to be tied in addition."

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER UPSET.

THE first shift at sitting up was taken by Prescott. He had believed he was thoroughly awake until he came to with a start, realizing that some one had been calling him. It was Bangor,

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and the big man inclined his head in the direction of the stream.

"Better move camp if you don't want to waterlog," the captive shouted. "The creek came up four feet the last hour."

Glancing behind him, Prescott was startled to see the pale opacity of water reflecting the starlight—not more than six feet from where he sat. Springing to his feet he flung more wood on the fire and by the blaze looked out over the turbid madness of boiling waters. The heaving surface of the stream was littered with flotsam. Logs, clumps of brush and stumps swept by in endless succession, while the noise of the gorge below had grown in volume until the whole canyon vibrated to its thunderous music.

Prescott ran to his partner and shook him.

"Wake up, Link!" he shouted. "We've got to move the raft and provisions."

Stumbling through the darkness to the raft, they found it hammering against the rocks. Hastily moving the provisions, they packed them far up the shore, then returned to drag the raft up.

Six times during the next few hours they repeated this operation, until their raft was beached higher than the tops of the cottonwood saplings that had been along the shore. Confident on the last occasion that they had got it so high that there was no possible danger of its being washed away, they examined Bangor's bonds, then threw themselves down for a last hour of sleep, with their provisions piled about them. When Prescott next awoke he was amazed to find the sun shining and the flood water receded almost to its old level. His first conscious thought was that there would be a big task of hauling the raft back to water. Next, with a feeling of panic, he noted that the raft was gone.

Springing to his feet, he ran to where it had last been tied and glanced about. They had left it roped to a big boulder as an extra precaution. Part of this rope was still lying on the ground. Grabbing it up, Prescott saw that it had been broken by repeated hammerings between rocks.

By this time Cassity had joined him. "How did it get loose?" he asked. "I see the water rose high enough to float it."

"I'm afraid it was cut," retorted Prescott. "Let's look for Bangor."

Hurrying to the spot where they had last left Bangor, they found it empty.

"How in the name of mud did he do it?" demanded the younger partner. "We left him tied till he looked like a cocoon."

Cassity pointed to a trail of broken grass and underbrush leading toward a huge piece of pine driftwood. "That's the direction he rolled in. Maybe we can tell more if we go down there."

At the log they halted and Cassity pointed a finger. "There's the how of it," he said.

Prescott's glance followed his comrade's finger and focused upon a sharp piece of rock, wedged into a crack a few inches from the ground. Upon this rock and the wood about it were bloodstains and bits of hemp fiber.

"He must have got that rock in his teeth," Cassity explained, "and worked until he wedged it into the crack. After that, he managed to drag his wrists back and forth across it until he cut the rope. That was a stunt calling for patience and nerve!"

"Why didn't he try to get a gun and shoot us?" wondered Prescott.

"Probably thought we'd wake up in time to stop him."

"You don't think he rode the raft down the gorge, do you?"

Cassity shook his head. "I doubt it. I imagine he knows of some trail that leads out of here, though to look at those cliffs you'd swear there wasn't any."

"It would be a big job finding one

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if it is there," observed Prescott. "These layers of rim rock are just like one of those labyrinth affairs set on end. Still, we've got to find a way up."

"But we can't rush that job," Cassity pointed out; "we've got to examine the base of the cliffs carefully and study the spaces of the rim rock with our field glasses before we start hiking. No use climbing up there till we've got at least a possible trail picked out. If we don't do that we'll only have to come back, with a lot of shoe leather and hide missing. First, I'm for breakfast. Then, when we've got that down, I'm ready to tackle this other job. If you want to, you can hunt along the canyon wall while I'm cooking."

Evening of that day found the partners still searching for a means of climbing out of the canyon. They had tried several routes, but without success.

"It's here somewhere, if we could only find it," insisted Cassity. "Bangor suggested that we leave the creek at this point, and I'm willing to bet my last dollar that he never attempted to ride the rapids below here in the dark by himself."

"Sure it's here," came Bangor's voice behind them. "Don't bother to jump, either. Just sit quiet and finish your coffee. We've got you covered a plenty."

One glance was enough to convince the partners of the truth of this statement. Several forms were advancing out of the shadows, while as many rifles gleamed in the firelight. With an effort, Prescott forced himself to remain quiet while he downed the rest of the steaming coffee. Cassity did likewise. In the meantime, two of the five men with Bangor stepped up and removed the revolvers from the prisoners' holsters. This finished, one of them looked inquiringly at Bangor.

"Whatcha goin' to do with 'em? Kill 'em here?"

"Of course I ain't, 'Spike,'" Bangor answered mildly. "I come back here to show these boys the way out. I ain't forgot all they did for me." As Bangor made this last statement, he bent an inscrutable glance upon the captives.

"I suppose Long sent you after us," suggested Prescott.

Bangor nodded. "Yep, that's right. You see, there wasn't nothin' I could do to save your fool necks but cut that raft loose an' hightail it out of here. If I had stayed, it was a cinch you'd have shot me, so I had to leave, and as there ain't no place to stop between here an' Long's camp, I naturally went there. I told Long what a pickle you was in an' we both agreed that you'd starve right here if we didn't come back and lead you out. Long sent the bunch along to help tote the pervisions so's you could travel light, like gentlemen. He's give you a mighty pressin' invitation to stay with him a while, too."

"What we goin' to do?" asked one of the men. "Tie 'em before we start?"

Bangor looked sad. "Yep, I reckon we'll have to. You see, these fellers are sort of despondent about not bein' able to drown on that raft. If we don't take precautions, one of them's likely to jump off that cliff. Tie 'em together an' fasten 'em behind the mule. If they go over, she can be depended on to hold on to 'em till we can haul 'em back to safety. I tell you, fellers, Long don't do things by halves. When he invites a feller to come to see him, he takes every kind of trouble to see that he gets there safe."

"Long didn't seem to be so interested in us when you were trying to knock us off the rocks," gibed Prescott.

Bangor laughed. "He was interested all right, only in a little different way. When I explained what a pair of guys you was, he wanted to see you. Hurry up, men, let's get lined up and started!"

One of the men laid rough hands on Prescott, who shook him off. "Let me alone till I take off this shoe."

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"What's wrong with the shoe?" demanded Bangor.

"It's got a rock in it. A man can't travel that way."

Bangor grinned. "That's too bad, but we ain't got time to wait. Leave the shoe alone."

Prescott paid no attention to the order and continued the unlacing.

"Spike," ordered Bangor, "I hate it, but looks like you'd have to knock a little sense into him."

Instantly, a fountain of stars gushed through Prescott's brain and the world went black. When he came to, some one was throwing water on him.

"Too bad you used that gun butt so hard," Bangor was lamenting. "His goin' dead has held us up better than half an hour."

"No one but a bunch of curs would do such a thing," Cassity shouted.

"No need of your gettin' red-headed, Cassity," placated Bangor. "We hate it just as bad as you do, but for your own good, you'll have to learn to obey orders. Me—I'm tender-hearted and compassionate. If people I'm fond of, like you an' Prescott, don't do what I want, it doesn't rile me any. But with Long it's different, for he might get aggravated an' be rough. Is Prescott so he can get up yet, Spike?"

"Acts kinda groggy," answered the outlaw, who had raised Prescott's head and shoulders.

"Set him up on his feet, a couple of you! Mebbe the air will bring him to."

Prescott tried to stiffen his body, but his legs seemed absolutely boneless, while his feet were hundred-pound weights. He sagged limply upon his supporters' arms.

Bangor looked at him critically.

"That must have been a nasty crack you give him. Kinda paralyzed his nerves, I reckon. Guess we'll have to give him somethin' stimulatin'."

Listlessly, Prescott stared about him and saw Bangor take a knife from his pocket. Opening the smallest blade, he grasped it about half an inch from the end. Stepping up to Prescott, he jabbed it into his back. Hot, protesting stabs of pain ran from the wound to Prescott's brain. A great rage burned itself through his numbness. Coördination between mind and muscles was again established and Prescott jumped forward to avoid the punishment.

"Fine," approved Bangor. "That treatment may seem kinda rough, but it sure gets results. Everybody ready? All right. Let's go."

For an hour afterward the queer cavalcade zigzagged up the different layers of rim rock. The course they followed was as intricate as a puzzle, and the partners found no difficulty in understanding their own failure to locate it. Once clear of the gorge their course led across a flat, star-lit desert of rock, while further to the west rose the black outline of a row of flat-topped mountains somewhat higher than the ridge they were now on. The outlaws paid no attention to their prisoners other than to keep them in sight and know that they were still bound.

"Link," whispered Prescott, "what do you think Long wants of us?"

"I don't know. But, as Bangor said about his holding Hazel and Colstrap, it probably isn't for anything good."

"Wonder what this Long looks like anyway."

"Haven't an idea, but he certainly must be some bear cat in his own field. I've always heard he was. And his being able to handle a man like Bangor proves it."

"Do you think Bangor has got it in for us much now?"

Cassity hesitated before answering. "Don't know. He's such an all-fired liar you can't tell. Of course, he's lower than a rat, but I believe he figures the breaks have been in his favor and that he's sort of good-humored about it all. Savage, of course, and cruel, but it's his

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idea of a good joke. How's your foot—the one with the rock in the shoe?"

"Better than I thought possible," admitted Prescott, "but I'm not telling Bangor that. He'd stop and fill 'em up for me."

Daybreak found the foot cavalcade working down the side of the mesa toward a narrow, wormlike band of muddy water.

"Elbow Creek," remarked Prescott.

"Yep," came Bangor's answer close beside him, "that's Elbow Creek, and it takes a lot of grease to either get up or down it."

"Is Long camped on it?"

"Nope. His headquarters are over on the other side—not far from that row of flat-topped mountains. He's got real comfortable quarters there an' it's restful. You ain't never bothered with visitors that ain't invited."

Coming to the stream, they forded it on a shallow riffle and followed along the west bank. Before they had proceeded in this direction for a quarter of an hour, Bangor turned up a steep slope of talus. At the juncture of shale and cliff, a narrow, steep-bottomed canyon opened before them. Bangor led the way up it.

After climbing along this side draw for a quarter of a mile, the bottom of it became more level and it branched out into several forks. Instead of going up one of these forks, as the partners expected, Bangor repeated an operation almost identical to the one that took them away from Elbow Creek. This time, however, when they reached the top of the talus slope, they moved around a large boulder and found themselves in front of a very narrow cave mouth.

Two men with rifles were standing beside this opening.

"Got 'em, I see," observed one of them.

"Of course I got 'em," answered Bangor. "Don't I get what I go after every time?"

"Go on," said the guard, "all of us admit you can talk circles around the rest."

The tunnel proved to be but a rod or so in length. As they passed through, Prescott could see that it had been blasted out and gave egress to a round basin, perhaps a mile in diameter. The point at which they entered this basin was just at the head of a long, smooth slope leading down to a flat that was more than two hundred rods across. From where they stood the cliffs rose in sheer walls to the mesa rim five hundred feet above.

As they moved down the slope, Prescott busied himself studying several knolls, perhaps a hundred feet in height, that rose from the basin bottom. These knolls were of naked rock and seemed to have several openings. Trees and grass grew in the north half of the basin, but the southern side was given over to smooth mud flats and marsh.

A puff of air came up from these marshes, and Prescott felt his nose twitch.

"What is it?" Cassity asked, glancing back.

"It's sulphur or somethin' of the sort," answered Bangor, who had heard the question. "Them is mineral springs. Water of that kind used to come out of all them hills in the first place, but the others has dried up. Used to be a volcano here a million years or so back, I reckon."

"So that's the how of the knolls," murmured Prescott. "Built up from mineral in the water. The only thing I could think of at first was ant hills."

Bangor laughed. "You never missed it so far then, neither. There's ants live in 'em right enough—ants that do their bitin' with six-guns, an' Long is the boss of them all. Yes, sir, we've got real classy apartments in them hills. Rooms any size you want, from a dog

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kennel to a lodge hall, an' the whole thing heated with warm air from the springs that's still runnin'! I'd tell you more about it only Long will likely want to show you round himself. That smell ain't nothin' to get excited over. A feller don't notice it long."

As they reached the bottom of the slope, Prescott noted that the marsh was much softer than he had first supposed. In fact, here and there were sluggish brown streams of warm, reeking water coiled across it. Always there were bubbles rising from the top as though some great animal lay below, with the air from its breathing stirring the slime.

"Them bubbles is from decayed vegetation," explained Bangor. "Used to be a forest under here, an' when Long first come, you could see a brown pine top. Springs was all dry for a while but looks now like they was comin' back. Mebbe all them hills will be spoutin' water in a few thousand years, but it ain't goin' to bother us none."

"How do you get across it?" asked Prescott.

"Our engineerin' department provided for that," retorted Bangor. "We've got a trail of logs sunk in that stuff a few inches under the top of the slime. It ain't very wide, though, an' none too straight, so you can see it wouldn't be no nice road for a surprise party to travel over. Spike'll lead the mule, an' you foller her. That way you'll make it all right."

Watching closely, Prescott perceived that here and there a peeled willow projected from the marsh and that it was by these willows that Spike seemed to plot out the devious trail.

"This is what I'd call some well-fortified robbers' roost," whispered Cassity. "You can't get down any way but across it. There's ledges at the other end."

"It looks as though Long had found the ideal retreat," agreed Prescott. "Must be the middle hill with the man standing on it that's headquarters. See! He's using a flag. Wigwagging, by George, to one of those birds up at the tunnel! You couldn't surprise this outfit in a hundred years."

To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

Read "HARDROCK HAS A CHILL," by SETH RANGER, in Next Week's Issue.

A SHEEP-HUNGRY LION

THE State lion hunter has been summoned to trail a crafty lion who has been stealing lambs from ranches near Skaggs' Springs, California. Ranchers of this section are also making ready to join in the hunt, as lion paw prints trailed by Walter Dickson, of Las Lomas Rancho, led to several lambs buried in the near-by hills.

BLACK SHEEP PREFERRED

IT is the proverbial black sheep that has always been shunned, but not so in Wyoming, for stock circles are at a loss to know who the killer is that prefers black sheep to white, for in every instance where herds have been attacked, the white sheep have been left and all the black ones have been killed.

Most of the losses have occurred in Green River locality, and as there are farmhouses near, it is believed that the culprit must be a dog, although it is reported that Albert M. Day, of the Wyoming biological survey, says he has never heard of an animal with such a trait.

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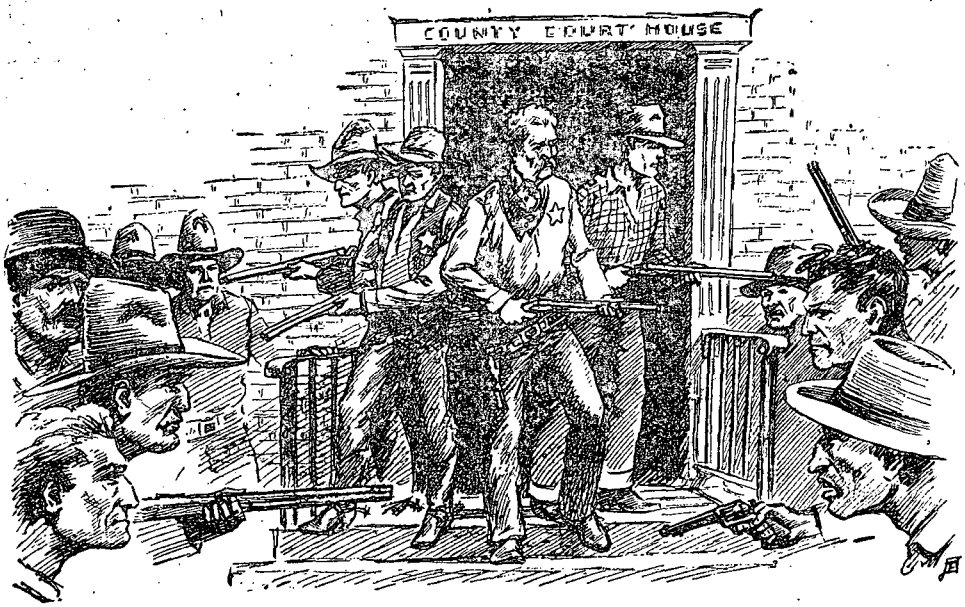

Sundown Orders

By Earl C. McCain

TROUBLE hung threateningly above the Cotopaxi County courthouse, in Rawlings, as old "Sundown" Jennings stopped his horse at the hitch rack in front of the building. With almost every cattleman and sheepman of Taola Basin gathered there awaiting his decision on a bitter range dispute, he knew anything was likely to happen.

Jennings himself was the central figure of that gathering. He appeared unconscious of his own importance as he swung his sturdy, range-clad form from the saddle; a heavy, plaited buckskin quirt dangling from his left wrist. But there was a hint of worry in the anxious glance he shot at the waiting crowd.

As range referee for Cotopaxi County, appointed by the district court under terms of a bill passed by the last legislature, old Sundown was to announce his decision on the grazing dispute that day. If the stockmen accepted his rulings peacefully, it would mean that arbitration had replaced gun fighting in the controversies of the range.

The arbitration bill was more than a hobby with old Sundown. It was something into which he had put his whole heart and soul. As an old-timer in that section—Cotopaxi County's sheriff for eight years—he had seen a half-dozen bitter range wars.

But times had changed now, and men no longer carried their own law in their holsters. He had worked for that bill in the legislature; fostered its passage with his own time and money. Because of that—because he was known far and wide as a square shooter and owned neither cattle nor sheep himself—he had been appointed range referee.

The salary that went with the appointment meant nothing to Jennings. He had enough money for his simple

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needs. But the principle of the thing meant a lot. All winter, he had ridden over the disputed sections, talking to cattlemen and sheepmen, checking water, grass, and herds, so that his decision, when announced, would be absolutely fair.

Tying his horse at the rack, old Sundown noticed two men step out from opposite sides of the courthouse lawn and start toward him. One of those, coming from a group of cattlemen on the right, was old Bob Sawyer, one of his best friends. The other was Cass Gilmore, owner of the biggest sheep outfit in the basin country.

Jennings was a big man, with the strength of a gnarled old oak. And there was something about his quiet, confident manner that hinted of courage to match his strength. He carried no gun now—had not done so for years. But he had carried one back in the old days, when he had been sheriff of that wild country and had acquired that nickname of Sundown.

Even as sheriff, Jennings had not killed many men. He had arrested those for whom he had warrants, and ordered others—including outlaws and bad men—to get out of his county before sundown. That had given him his nickname, and his reputation was such that his sundown orders had seldom been ignored.

The old referee had tied his horse, and was standing upon the sidewalk, when Sawyer and Gilmore stopped, facing him.

"Howdy, Bob. Howdy, Cass," he greeted them impartially, a trace of a smile about the corners of his mouth. He knew both men had intended to reach him first; to make last-minute appeals for range concessions. But their walking race across the courthouse lawn had ended in a draw.

Gilmore and Sawyer both answered him in a friendly manner. And since neither man could say what was on his mind in the presence of the other, they silently joined Sundown.

"Reckon you fellers must be a sort of reception committee," Jennings said good-naturedly, glancing again at the two groups on the lawn. "Kinder 'pears like the whole basin's turned out for this occasion."

"It has, and most ev'ry man in both crowds is packin' a gun," Sawyer replied quietly. Like Sundown, Sawyer was an old-timer, with plenty of iron in his rugged old soul. Thoughtfully, he rubbed his grizzled, wiry mustache with a bony hand as he added:

" 'Twouldn't surprise me none if this here meetin' ends up in a gun ruckus."

Sundown's gray eyes swept the two crowds appraisingly. Those men seemed to be waiting quietly, but there were plenty of guns in sight. He knew that a shot from either faction there now would probably start a range war, shatter the fondest dream of his life. But he tried to keep any hint of worry out of his voice as he replied:

"Pshaw, now, Bob. Don't figger that a way. The time's come when men can settle their differences without goin' after their guns."

"Not when it's a range fight, with both sides needin' grass and water," Sawyer stated, with a sharp glance at Gilmore. "I know you b'lieve in peace, Sundown; that's why you worked so hard to get the legislature to pass that arbitration bill. But cattlemen have allus fought sheep, and I reckon they allus will."

Jennings glanced quickly at Gilmore, but the sheepman only nodded thoughtfully at Sawyer's statement. Gilmore, a quiet, middle-aged man—dressed in a neat corduroy suit—looked more like a city business man than one who made his living from the range. But for all that, he was a worthy foe for any man.

After taking a moment to weigh his words, Sundown was about to answer Sawyer's last statement when he

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stopped abruptly. A tall, lanky individual, with a hawklike nose, beady black eyes, and two heavy six-guns in tied-down holsters at his thighs, had stepped out from the crowd of sheepmen on the lawn and was walking toward them.

Half consciously, old Sundown tightened his fingers about the stock of his quirt as the stranger approached. He did not like the man's crouching poise, the way his hands hung, clawlike, just above his belt, nor the glare in his mean little eyes. But it seemed the fellow was not looking for him.

"Like to speak to you a minute, Sawyer," the man began, his tone making the words a demand. He stepped onto the lawn, on Sawyer's side, and stood waiting.

"All right. Reckon I got time to hear what's on your mind," Sawyer replied, eying the other keenly. "I'll foller you in a minute, Sundown."

As Jennings, nodding, continued toward the courthouse door, Gilmore glanced back and remarked:

"Now there's something I don't like, Sundown. Got any idea who that hook-nosed jasper is?"

"No. Never saw him before that I recollect," Jennings made reply. "I may be wrong but he looks kinder tough to me."

"He is tough; downright bad," Gilmore stated positively. "That's 'Bad News' Vase, professional killer, from down Sonora way. He's up here lookin' for a job, because he heard range trouble threatened. He tackled me first; wanted to hire out to me as a gunman at five dollars a day and fifty dollars extra for each man he kills."

"He did, eh?" Sundown exclaimed sharply, pausing to look back at the man who now stood talking to Sawyer.

"I turned him down cold; told him I wasn't hiring any gunman except as a last resort," Gilmore went on. "But perhaps I made a mistake. I might have kept him away from Sawyer by hiring him."

"Sawyer won't hire him; he don't want any trouble, either," Jennings said defensively. "But I'm plumb sorry to see a feller like that hangin' around. Some of the boys are kinder worked up about this range dispute, and a feller like Vase always makes things worse."

For an instant, old Sundown caught himself wishing he could recall the years —years in which he had been sheriff of the county. He'd have given that fellow sundown orders, because the man was certainly hunting trouble! But, of course, he wasn't sheriff any longer, and he was trying to promote peace on the range.

Jennings and Gilmore were at the courthouse door now. Pausing there to look back, the range referee noticed that Sawyer had walked away from Vase; was coming on toward the building. And from both sides of the lawn, groups of men were slowly moving toward the door.

Satisfied that Sawyer had not hired the gunman, Sundown stepped into the building and led the way into the room where court was held. Men were already coming through the doorway when he seated himself at the clerk's desk and unfolded a range map that he took from his pocket.

Gilmore, being the first to follow Jennings inside, had taken a seat on the right side of the aisle. A cattleman, coming next, had turned to the left. Thereafter, all those who could get into the building naturally split up into two crowds.

Sawyer, one of the last to enter, strode forward and took a seat on a front bench, facing the referee. Seeing Vase follow Sawyer through the door, Sundown was wondering if he had hired the gunman after all. Then he noticed that Vase was with young Holly Brame, owner of the old Cross L outfit, and a newcomer in that section.

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The clerk's desk was in the front of the building, facing the door. When the crowd had quieted somewhat, old Jennings rose and cleared his throat. He was not used to making speeches, but he was expected to say something. He laid aside his hat, smoothed his hair with a gnarled hand, and began:

"You men all know what this meetin's for; you know the last legislature passed the range arbitration bill to try and avoid bloodshed. As range referee, appointed under terms of that bill, it's up to me to divide the free range in and around Taola Basin fairly between the cattlemen and the sheepmen."

He paused and wiped the moisture from his brow with a big bandanna as his eyes swept the room. The men were facing him quietly now, would remain that way until he announced his decisions. Rather hastily, he went on:

"Before I go any fu'ther, or announce my rulin's, I want to tell you men I've tried to be fair in this. I've ridden over most of the land concerned, checked up on water, grass, and the amount of stock each man owns, and I've considered all them things in my decisions."

Boots scraped on the floor as Jennings reached down for his map. Brame and Vase, unable to find seats in the rear of the room, had tiptoed forward to take places on the bench beside Sawyer. Since Brame's ranch lay near the upper end of the basin, old Sundown's eyes settled on that end of the map first.

"Startin' at the upper end of the basin, we'll move north to south," he explained. "And that means we'll start with Indian Hills. The Cross L, layin' across the crick from that, as well as Dead Tree Flats, just south of it, sometimes uses both. My rulin' is that Dead Tree Flats is open for cattle only, and that Indian Hills is to be used for sheep."

"The heck it is!" Brame suddenly exclaimed, springing to his feet. "Just why have you selected me to be the goat in this?"

"Nobody's bein' made a goat, Brame," Sundown said quietly. "You're gettin' Dead Tree Flats, that used to be used for sheep alone. But Indian Hills, bein' high like it is, is natural sheep land."

"I don't give a hoot what you say it is," Brame flared, stepping forward aggressively. "It's been used for cattle ever since I bought the Cross L, and it's going to be used for cattle still!"

Brame was young, tall, and powerfully built, with a flaming temper that made him dangerous on occasion. His black eyes snapping with anger, he half turned toward Bad News Vase, who had risen just behind him.

"You struck me for a job just now, feller, and you're hired," Brame grated. "You, and any more like you who happen along. I'll be needin' a whole crew of gunmen, I reckon, because I'm not going to be robbed, law or no law!"

Every man in the room was on his feet now, including Sundown. Brame's flushed face, his blazing anger, meant that he was half drunk. In an effort to quiet him, Jennings, pushing forward, ordered:

"Sit down, Brame! You don't know what you're sayin'!"

"Who says I don't?" Brame shot back, whirling toward the old referee again. "You'll change that ruling, right here, or you won't ever be able to make another!"

Old Sundown, gray-haired and wrinkled, stood about four feet from Brame, coiling the fingers of his left hand about the butt of his quirt. He carried no gun, but fine, raw courage sparkled in his old gray eyes. His voice was hard as granite as he quietly answered that demand:

"That decision stands, Brame! Indian Hills is sheep ground hereafter!"

Brame was armed, a six-gun resting in a holster on his right hip. Crouching-ing forward suddenly, his right hand shot back toward it. But it did not reach its goal.

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Old Bob Sawyer, standing beside him, seized the young cattleman's arm in a grip of steel. He snatched the gun out of Brame's scabbard as he rasped:

"Ca'm down, now, you danged hothead! Don't you know you're facin' old Sundown Jennings?"

Brame, without his gun, cooled instantly. And Bad News Vase, walled in by a dozen grim-lipped men, was in no position to help him. A newcomer to the Taola Basin country, Brame did not know Jennings. That was clear from his next statement to Sawyer.

"Sundown Jennings, eh? Well, what's so darn dangerous about him? Looks to me like he ain't even packin' a gun!"

"Sundown don't need a gun to handle fellers like you," Sawyer answered. "He'd 'a' had your own gun before you ever got a chance to pull the trigger."

Brame's face assumed an expression of surprise. But the look he gave old Sundown showed respect. Sawyer, moving forward, placed the young cattleman's gun on the referee's desk. But Jennings calmly returned the weapon to Brame as he resumed his place.

"Reckon we'll go ahead with this meetin'," he announced when the room had quieted. Turning to Brame and Vase, who still stood facing him, he added:

"As a cattleman, you're entitled to remain here, Brame. But I figger we won't need that gunman you just hired."

Bad News' thin lips drew tight; his eyes took on a baleful, flickering glare as he spun toward the referee. But it was Brame who hurled an answer to the statement.

"If Vase goes, I'm going too," he snapped. And nobody offered any objection as they strode from the courtroom.

Sundown had turned back to his map, and had started to announce his ruling on another section of range, when interruption came. Outside a gun crashed once, twice, and the glass in the transom over the courtroom door was shattered by flying lead!

Sundown noticed Gilmore, sitting up front to the right of the aisle, suddenly clap a hand to his head. The hand came away spotted with crimson, and a red smear showed across his forehead!

A half-dozen sheepmen leaped to Gilmore's side, guns in their hands, as they wanted to know if he was hard hit. Half dazed for an instant, he shook his head. Then as Sundown reached his side, he smiled and said:

"Just a sliver of flying glass, I guess, Sundown. But what in thunder's broke loose outside?"

The courtroom had become a place of wild action, every man struggling to reach the door. Outside were a half hundred cowboys, sheep-herders, and straggling herd-owners who had been unable to get inside. Each man in the room felt sure those shots meant that a battle had started.

Jennings, reaching the door last, was puzzled at what he saw. Cattlemen and sheepmen were gathering on opposite sides of the lawn; half of them with guns in their hands. Each group faced the other aggressively, but no more shots were being fired.

Back near the courthouse steps stood Vase and Brame. The gunman's face wore a cold, sardonic smile, and a thin spiral of smoke floated upward from a gun in his hand. Vase had evidently fired those shots to break up the meeting, to start a range war from which he might profit.

Hearing a rush of footsteps inside the courthouse, the referee faced about, to see that the excitement had brought its own remedy. Tobe Allison, veteran sheriff of the county, was running up the corridor with three deputies. And each man carried a sawed-off repeating shotgun!

Allison, having his office in that building and probaby fearing trouble because

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of the armed men on the lawn, had been fully prepared to cope with the situation. Pushing through the door, the officers halted on the steps; two shotguns facing each section of the crowd.

"Put away them guns, everybody!" the sheriff roared, his blue eyes snapping as he faced the crowd. "We're cuttin' down with buckshot on the first man who pulls a trigger out there!"

Men on both sides began sheathing their weapons, though every one was keeping a hand close to his holster. Those shots had crashed on taut nerves, and Gilmore's injury had aroused the sheepmen. After watching the crowd a moment, the sheriff turned to Jennings with a question:

"Hadn't you better postpone this meetin', Sundown? There's going to be trouble here if you don't."

Old Sundown took a moment for thought, aware that those shots had probably wrecked his plan. But he was also aware that another shot would mean immediate range war. When he answered the question, the sheriff again faced the crowd.

"Sundown's postponed this meetin' until ten o'clock to-morrow," he announced. "And I reckon you fellers better be driftin' outa town." He waited a moment, then turned back with another question:

"Who the dickens fired them shots, anyway?"

"Reckon it was Vase, sheriff; his gun's still smokin'," Jennings answered, pointing out the gunman. "If I was you, I believe I'd jug that feller for disturbance."

"C'mere, you!" the sheriff yelled at Bad News, tilting down the muzzle of his shotgun. "It's always the outsiders, hired killers like you, that start trouble in range wars."

The killing hunger was hot in Vase's eyes as he faced about, hands hovering just above his belt. But the shotguns of all three deputies now pointed at him. He might "get" the sheriff, but only an instant before he died himself.

With a careless shrug, Vase stepped forward, and permitted a deputy to remove his guns. But the flickering, deadly gaze he turned on Sundown meant he had overheard the referee's remark, and knew that Jennings had been responsible for his arrest.

The crowd had started to disperse now, though a careless remark might still cause a row. Sheriff Allison, leaving his deputies on guard, headed Vase toward the courthouse door. Sundown and Sawyer were still standing on the steps when the gunman, passing the referee, hissed:

"I'll be gettin' out soon, old-timer. And when I do, I'm pluggin' you on sight!"

There was a worried look on Sawyer's seamed old face the next morning when he rode up to the courthouse and noticed small groups of cattlemen and sheepmen scattered about the lawn. A clock across the street showed five minutes after ten. But those men, waiting outside the courthouse, meant that old Sundown had not arrived yet.

Sawyer had heard Vase's threat to Jennings the day before, and he knew that the killer had later been released on bail. Since Vase had only fired those shots to break up the meeting—had not shot any one—the only charge against him was disturbance. Holly Brame, having hired Vase during his anger over Sundown's ruling on Indian Hills, had promptly signed the killer's bond.

Sawyer had ridden past Jennings' place to tell him about that the evening before. Sundown hadn't seemed much worried; hadn't even promised to strap on his gun. But Sawyer, having talked to Vase and seen that flickering light in his eyes, knew that the man was deadly as a shedding rattlesnake.

Striding up to the courthouse door, Sawyer met Gilmore, who wore a plas-

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ter over the cut on his brow. The cattleman was surprised to learn that the sheepman knew about Vase's threat to get Sundown.

"Everybody seems to know about it now," Gilmore explained, nodding toward the men on the lawn. There were not half as many present as had been there the day before, but they seemed watchful and nervous.

Vase, after being released on bond the night before, had repeated his threat to kill Jennings. Brame, having cooled off and sobered after his outburst in the courtroom, had tried to dissuade the gunman from carrying out his threat. But Brame's advice had fallen on deaf ears.

News of the threat had been passed from man to man, causing an air of expectancy to hover over the crowd. Vase had been seen about the courthouse when the first men arrived, though he had disappeared now. All those men knew old Sunndown, and Gilmore, glancing at them, remarked:

"I guess every man out there is hoping that Sundown stays away."

"Mebbe, but I'm afraid he won't," Sawyer answered. "He postponed that meetin' until ten o'clock to-day. If he don't show up, it'll be the first time I ever knowed him to dodge an appointment in twenty years."

"There's really no reason why he has to come," Gilmore said. "He need only notify us of his ruling on the disputed range and the sheepmen will abide by his decisions. All we ask is a fair distribution of the range, and we know Sundown's fair."

"I reckon the cattlemen feel the same way; that is, all of them except a few hot-heads like Brame. And I guess he's come to his senses now."

The cattleman, staring out across the lawn, suddenly stiffened, and caught Gilmore's arm as he exclaimed:

"There's Vase, now! Over in front of the pool hall!"

Down the opposite side of the street, before the buildings that faced the courthouse, the killer was coming with measured stride. But aside from his walk, there was nothing careless in his coming.

His eyes were searching the groups of men on the lawn; seeking the man he had threatened to kill. His hands hovered about his gun belt, just above his sagging holsters. He resembled nothing so much as a beast of prey stalking a kill.

Drawing near the courthouse, aware of the eyes watching him from the lawn, Vase shortened his steps until he walked with catlike tread. Once he stopped abruptly, and spun half around, as he heard a door open behind him. But seeing that the door had been opened by a woman coming from a store, he turned back and came slowly on.

Vase was almost opposite the courthouse door—was passing in front of the post office—when he suddenly checked his stride. Out from the door of the latter building had stepped old Sundown, directly into the killer's path!

"Good gosh! He's got no gun!" Sawyer exclaimed tersely, noting that Jennings wore no holster. The referee's only weapon, if a weapon it might be called, was that buckskin quirt dangling from his left wrist.

Surprised at the sudden appearance of the man he sought, Vase had rocked back on his heels, then crouched half forward, his face the picture of burning hate. Both hands flashed toward his guns, sped down with the speed of light! But fast as he was, he was not fast enough.

Sundown, stepping forward quickly, twisted his left wrist; the one that held that quirt. Out and upward the lash flicked, like the darting tongue of a snake. Two long thongs, tipped with lead, entwined themselves around Vase's right wrist and the gun already clear of his holster.

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That was old Sundown's quirt trick; the reason he always wore that lash on his wrist. It had disarmed a half dozen killers when he had been sheriff, had made it almost unnecessary for him to pack a gun.

As those thongs caught the killer's right hand, Sundown jerked sharply, pulling the man off balance. With a quickness surprising in a man of his girth, Jennings moved in closer, and caught Vase's left hand with his own powerful right.

Sundown's left hand had slid downward on the quirt, below the heavy, lead-loaded stock. Before Vase could free his right hand—jerk his fingers out of those encircling thongs and the trigger guard of his gun, that quirt butt caught him squarely across the forehead.

The killer went down like a pole-axed steer, his right hand still entwined in those thongs. Sundown, leaning forward, freed his quirt and calmly plucked both the man's guns. Shoving one inside the waistband of his trousers, holding the other in his right hand, he stood waiting until Vase stirred, then he hauled the dazed gunman to his feet.

Cattlemen and sheepmen both joined in a cheer as the referee, jamming one of the killer's own guns against his back, marched him across the street and up the steps of the courthouse. But Sundown neither spoke nor stopped until he had gun-prodded Vase into the courtroom.

Back at the clerk's desk he had occupied the day before, the hard-faced old referee halted. Placing both of Vase's guns on the desk before him, and motioning the cowed gunman to a chair in front of him, old Jennings faced the men who were rapidly filling the room.

"This meetin' was set for ten o'clock to-day, and I'm a little late," he began, smiling. "Now that we're here, I don't figger to take up much time."

He stopped, flipped back the lapel of his coat, exposing a silver badge. Then he went on:

"Last night, after Brame threatened to kill me, I had a talk with Sheriff Allison. The sheriff figgers like I do, that a decision don't amount to much unless it's backed up by force."

Pausing, he reached into his pocket and drew out his old range map.

"Now, I'm gonna post this map, showin' my rulin's, on the bulletin board out in the hall. Them decisions are the fairest I know how to make, though I'm willin' to talk to any man about changin' them. But this deputy sheriff badge is my authority to deal with anybody who starts trouble."

Another pause, and the fierce old eyes rested on the scowling gunman. Sundown's voice took on a harder note as he continued:

"I ain't worryin' much about trouble with you men, because you're generally willin' to listen to reason. It's the outsiders, the hired gunmen like Vase here, who usually start range wars. And there's only one way to deal with fellers like him!"

Leaning forward, Sundown spoke directly to Vase:

"You got until sundown to get out of this county!"

Vase, realizing that meant he was free to go, rose quickly and started down the aisle. Holly Brame, standing just inside the door, met the gunman with a cold stare, and turned his body away as the killer started to pass. And the cowman's half turn swung the holster on his hip into full view.

Instantly, Vase galvanized into action. Quick as a flash, he snatched out the weapon and faced the referee.

"Give me sundown orders, will you! Well, you've written your own ticket to——"

His gun hand swept up, a finger already crooked about the trigger. Death hovered, waiting, in the glare of his flickering eyes. But the crash that filled the courtroom did not come from that gun.

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Old Sundown, following the gunman with a wary eye, had seen Vase streak a hand to Brame's holster. Down flashed Sundown's own hand, to the killer's two guns lying on his desk. He fired first, from the level of his waist, and the bullet, speeding down that open aisle, drilled the daring Vase squarely between the eyes.

The smoke was clearing, old Sundown was striding down the aisle, when he found Brame suddenly blocking his path. But the young cattleman said quietly:

"I want you to know I had nothing to do with this, Sundown. I tried to talk Vase out of it last night, but he wouldn't listen to me. And I also want you to know I'm ready to abide by any range decision that you post."

And old Sundown, noting the expressions of both cattlemen and sheepmen around him as he glanced down at the dead killer, knew that Vase's appearance had been fortunate. It had shown both factions the folly of gun play; meant that arbitration had replaced warfare on the range.

THE SEAL SAVER

THE recent death of Henry Wood Elliott brought to the attention of the reading public the name of a man whose work is of importance to all Americans and more particularly to those who are interested in Alaska and its valuable denizens, the fur seals. The seal industry of the Pribiloff Islands is now an important monopoly of the American government, and this is due to the alertness of Mr. Elliott, who so long as sixty-five years ago realized the value of these particular residents of Alaska. He was then with the Smithsonian Institution.

There are a number of interesting facts connected with these seals, which are wards of the bureau of fisheries. Perhaps the most curious, especially in this year of censusing, is that the seals are censused every year—instead of merely once in every ten years. The exact figure of the seal population is included in the annual report of the governor of Alaska. For a considerable time the seal herds showed an alarming decrease in numbers, owing to the prevalence of pelagic sealing in the North Pacific, but a long period of conservation remedied this condition, and in 1928 the seal population numbered eight hundred seventy-one thousand. The furs are sold at auction in St. Louis. It is intimated by authorities on the subject that the furs may soon again be available for commerce, and the popular and flattering sealskins will be certain to find their way to my lady's wardrobe. Persons commercially interested in the conservation of the seals, and high authorities on the subject, have been unanimous in praise of Mr. Elliott's patriotic diligence and speak in terms of warmest approbation of the great service he rendered to the country.

RELIEF RATIONS FOR INDIAN CHILDREN

THERE are twenty-five thousand Indian children under the care of the United States government. Although the vast sum of seven million one hundred eighty-two thousand five hundred dollars has already been allotted for Indian school expenses, this does not seem to be adequate, and an effort is being made to increase it. An allowance of thirty-four cents per child for food does not seem a very great amount, but statistics show that the children gain from five to twenty pounds during a school term, and lose it as soon as they return to their homes for the vacation period.

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The Square Shooter

By Walt Coburn

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

YOUNG Boone breaks with his "father," the brutal "Jawbone" Smith, and goes on his own. Smith is hunted by Marshal Tex Harmer, "poison mean." At Miles City, Boone humiliates Lieutenant Clanton, who calls him a horse thief, but rides on at the friendly sheriff's advice. He meets "Beaver" Brown, old trapper, who claims to have been Jawbone's partner; and later rescues Judge Lee and his daughter, Virginia, in a stagecoach holdup. Pride compels him to forego their grateful offers. He teams with Jeremy Lee, the judge's gambling nephew. Lee suddenly cools, and the acquaintance ends. A dying outlaw warns Boone to tell Jawbone that Tex Harmer "has caught up." Judge Lee is shot. Boone is seized by the mob. Jawbone is seen swimming downstream. Jeremy frees Boone's bonds and suggests that he shoot Jawbone to avenge the judge. Boone bitterly refuses, is imprisoned and later befriended by Ken Hanley, brother of the Miles City sheriff. His jail mate is "Snowball," cook of the SL, where Boone has many friends. The hungry waddies plan a rescue, but Boone tells Snowball he will stick.

CHAPTER XIX.

PLAIN TALK.

UPTOWN, the SL cowboys drank but little. They wandered around town, taking an occasional drink, no more. Bit by bit they picked up the story of Judge Lee's shooting, the escape of "Jawbone," and the jailing of Boone. The talk against Boone was bitter. All sorts of crimes were hung on his name. The SL cowboys said nothing. They liked Boone and wanted to do something to help him. With that idea in mind, they hunted up the sheriff. They found him in the Gold Bug, talking to Ken Hanley.

"Us boys," said the spokesman for the SL outfit, "knows this Boone boy that you got locked up. We'd do a heap for him. If he needs money or any kind of help, we'll stand the price."

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"It might be," said the sheriff grimly, "that I'll have to call on you boys later on. There's some talk about lynchin', but I dunno if they'll tackle it. Ken Hanley here is Boone's friend. We been talkin' her over. Ken's boys are in town, and will lend a hand. But I don't want ary gun battle if I can help it. Ain't you boys from the SL outfit?"

"That's our brand, sheriff."

"I got a Negro locked up that claims he cooked for the SL."

"Yeh?" A look of innocence spread across the faces of the SL cowboys. "We've had a lot of cooks. He might be one of 'em."

"He claims Till Driscoll is goin' to get him free. I hope so, for he's a good boy."

"Mebbeso he'll get free, then. Well, sheriff, when you need us, just holler. We'll be mopin' around somewheres. And we'd be just mighty proud to meet up with them parties as aim to lynch our pardner, Boone. You got a guard at the jail?"

"Couple of Ken's boys is ridin' around down there."

"That's a good idee," said an SL cow-puncher. "How would it be if a couple of us rode on down to relieve 'em after a while?"

"They've been on about an hour now," said Ken Hanley. "I was goin' to send my two oldest sons down to spell 'em."

"Our boss give us warnin' he'd fire any of us that got drunk," grinned the cowboy, "and this temptation around Fort Benton is shore strong. It's a-wearin' us down, somethin' fearful. Mebbeso we better fork our ponies and take along a bottle an' ride herd on your jail."

"Suit yourselves, boys," grinned the sheriff. "If that lynchin' party saw a crowd down there on guard, it might take a lot of the notions outa their systems. But mind, boys, no shootin' by a single one of you unless you just have to shoot."

"We learned many a long day ago to keep our guns in their scabbards. Us boys is aimin' to go back to Texas. We ain't dickerin' for no golden harps, whatever."

The sheriff and Ken Hanley watched them as they rode swiftly down the street.

"You don't reckon they'll try to steal Boone outa jail, Ken?"

"Dunno. They might try. But somehow I'd lay a big bet that the boy wouldn't run. He's no quitter, and he's got good reason for wantin' to clear himself. For unless I'm gettin' blind, Boone and that baby girl of Judge Lee's is kinda fond of one another. Just kid fancy, but it'll do a lot for a boy like Boone. It's what he needs. When Bill said in his letter that the boy was a high-strung colt, he hit the nail on the head. Well, I'm goin' over to the hospital to see how the judge is comin' on. Doc says he has an even chance unless somethin' sets in to poison his blood. Got ary line on the Jawbone gent?"

"Not yet, Ken. I've got three-four posses out. That's what has throwed me short-handed here in case of a jail delivery. Lucky them SL boys come to town."

"Virginia says that this Jawbone stepped up to the judge and said somethin' to him that she didn't ketch. The judge stepped back like he was startled, and his hand went to his chest. He's had a couple of heart attacks the past few years, and mebbeso one took him. This Jawbone, drunk and on the kill, thought the judge was goin' for his gun, I reckon. So he cuts loose. When the judge gets conscious and can talk, he might be able to clear up this business. That is, if he'll talk."

"What do you mean, Ken?"

"It just might be that there's some things in his past life that Judge Lee

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wouldn't want to talk about. Things he's buried deep."

"Most of us," said the sheriff, "can look back and remember things we done that was wrong. The man that never was wrong, Ken, wouldn't be fit to judge the faults of others. I've wondered a lot about that, and I knowed that Judge Lee must have made his mistakes because he is so fair on the bench. Well, see you later, Ken."

The sheriff prowled the streets, listening, watching, keeping the pulse of his town. He looked for Jeremy Lee, but the river gambler was nowhere to be found. Lieutenant Clanton, he knew, was at the hospital. But Jeremy Lee and Tex Harmer were not to be found. They had been seen together once or twice, so the sheriff drew his own conclusions.

Now a man on horseback came down the street. The sheriff hailed him. The rider was one of his deputies.

"Locate 'em?"

"They're gathered about five miles down the river. Harmer's the big chief. No sign of the gambler, though. They plan to break into the jail at midnight. They'll try to rush it, I reckon. There must be a hundred men in the mob."

"There's about fifteen SL cowhands down at the jail now. There's ten of Ken Hanley's boys scattered around town. And there must be some more men in Fort Benton that stand for law and order strong enough to side against these drunken hoodlums. And when the sign shows danger, I'm givin' Boone a gun and let him use it. The man I want to see now is this Jeremy Lee, the judge's nephew."

"He's a slick un, sheriff."

"Slick? I'll tell a man! And dangerous."

The sheriff would have been doubly convinced could he have been witness to a little scene being enacted in a cabin down on the river bank.

Jeremy Lee and a roughly garbed man faced one another across a table on which stood a lighted candle. The two tied holsters on the other man's thighs were empty of weapon. Jeremy Lee, his handsome face inscrutable, his black eyes glittering from under the straight black brows, took his own guns and extracted the loads. Then he walked to the door and, opening it, dropped the guns outside. Now he locked the door and put the key in his waistcoat pocket. The bearded, roughly clad man, eyed him with venomous glance, his coarse lips sneering.

Now the river gambler removed his coat, and from an inside pocket took a package wrapped in brown paper. His slender, well-kept hands undid the package. From the paper he took two brand-new bowie knives. With a deft twist of his wrist, he stuck one of the knives in the table within an inch of where one of the burly fellow's hands rested. The man jerked back his hand, the sneer gone from his lips. Jeremy Lee smiled as he balanced the other knife in his hand.

"Now, brother Fouchet, you and I will play a little two-handed game. I tricked you into coming here so that, before I killed you, we would meet, just the two of us, alone, and face to face. Your clumsy shooting ruined a good hat for me. Twice before you've tried to kill me. But luck favored me. You followed me here from St. Louis. I thought I recognized you among the crowd on the boat, but I couldn't be positive. Then I saw you in a saloon here, talking business with the Jawbone party. Shortly after which you tried to shoot me, and almost succeeded. Fouchet, one of us will leave this cabin alive. In a moment I'll put out the light. We'll be in the dark, each with a knife. I could have shot you when I had the drop, and made you throw away your guns. I could have killed you a moment ago when I flipped that

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knife into the table instead of into your heart. Notice that the point is buried a good two inches in the wood. It's a trick I learned from a knife thrower in Mexico.

"But I didn't kill you, Fouchet. I want you in the dark, with the fear of death chilling your black heart. I hate to see a man die. But in the dark, Fouchet, I won't be able to see you. I'll only hear the death rattle in your throat as you lie there on the floor. Giving you a knife is, to be frank with you, just a matter of form. Because the instant that candlelight goes out, the knife in my hand will slide through the darkness before you can move, and this six-inch blade will be buried to the hilt in your heart. I am waiting, brother Fouchet, for you to pick up your knife."

The man backed away from the weapon, fear widening his eyes.

"It'll be murder. I'm no knife man. I'll fight you any other way, but not with a knife. A knife is a greaser weapon. I—I always had a fear of knife cuts."

"Most men have," smiled the river gambler. "That is why I chose these nice bowie knives. I love the feel of a well-balanced knife. I spent two hours finding the ones I wanted." Jeremy Lee leaned across the table.

"I am about to blow out the light, Fouchet."

"Don't! Gosh, man, don't! Don't kill me like that! Take a gun and shoot me! But not that way, Lee! Not a knife!"

Slobbering, his lips trembling, the burly coward dropped to his knees, his hands gripping the table edge, begging and whimpering for his life.

"Gimme a chance! Say, gimme a chance! I can tell you somethin' that'll keep you from bein' killed! There's others besides me want to see you dead. I'll tell you everything. And I'll pull out and go away where you'll never see me no more! I'll swear it! Gimme a chance to talk, Jeremy Lee!"

Not a muscle of the river gambler's countenance changed. His voice was cold, deadly, without mercy, when he spoke.

"Talk then, Fouchet. Talk fast. And talk straight. If you lie, I'll know it and this knife will slide into your black heart. Commence!"

Fear kept the cringing man to the truth. For half an hour he talked in halting, broken, whispered sentences, while the candlelight guttered, throwing weird shadows across the crude walls.

Jeremy Lee, his face masklike, save for a merciless smile, listened to every word. He had slipped into his coat, and when Fouchet had done speaking, he unlocked the door. As he stepped outside, the burly man followed. As the river gambler picked up his two empty guns, a gun roared in the renegade's hand. But Jeremy Lee had leaped to one side. The tiny derringer that had somehow filled the gambler's hand barked twice. Fouchet, with a snarling, gasping moan, slid to the floor. His heavy body twitched convulsively, then lay without a movement.

Jeremy Lee stood over him, reloading the dangerous little derringer that had taken the other man's life.

"I figured you'd try it, Fouchet," he said coldly to the dead man; "that's why I left your gun where you'd make a break for it. You understand, Fouchet, that you knew too much. You simply had to die. It was in the cards from the beginning."

He closed the door on the dead man and walked back to town. He did not slacken his brisk pace until he reached the hospital.

"Has Judge Lee regained consciousness?" he asked of the surgeon.

"He has. But his condition is precarious. There is something that troubles his mind. Without that mental

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burden, he'd have a fair chance for recovery."

Jeremy Lee nodded. "Tell him that I called, doctor. And give him this message from me. Tell him that Raoul Fouchet is dead. The judge will understand. And the message will lift a part of the burden that weighs on his mind and heart."

As Jeremy Lee was leaving, he met Lieutenant Harry Clanton in the hallway. The young army officer seemed to be in a bad humor. The river gambler's eyebrow lifted questioningly.

"She won't give me any satisfaction about that horse," the officer growled. "And she handed out some rather nasty remarks. You're her cousin, why don't you try to get it out of her where the horse is?"

"I'm an attorney, old chap, not a detective. Besides, my fair cousin's opinion of me is not the highest, to put it mildly. As I recall her words, she described me as a card sharper, a black sheep, and a trickster. But she's your fiancée, I believe."

"She was," corrected Lieutenant Clanton with a frigid smile. "She broke the engagement a few minutes ago. She's championing that horse thief. I've a mind to chuck the whole thing."

"That," shrugged Jeremy Lee, "is wholly up to you, lieutenant. I'm merely your attorney in the matter of this horse-stealing case. And unless you produce the horse, we have absolutely no case against the Boone fellow. There are thousands of bay horses. It's up to us to prove ownership of the horse that he rode into town, then sent out to the judge's ranch. You must understand, old fellow, that I have other things to attend to, and cannot be using valuable time hunting this horse. As you know, Boone can and probably will demand immediate trial. And if we have no horse to show the twelve good men and true, where is our case against him?"

"I'll get the horse, with or without your help. Confound it, I'm doing all the work on this case!"

Jeremy Lee selected a long, black cheroot from a sealskin case and painstakingly lit it. His hands were steady. Lieutenant Clanton did not notice the tiny trickle of blood that came down the coat sleeve of the river gambler. Fouchet's bullet had torn through his coat and shirt, grazing the skin just enough to draw blood.

"My dear Clanton," smiled Jeremy Lee, "I must repeat that I am merely an attorney at law, not a detective. When I am not engaged in the legal profession, I gain a certain relaxation from the gaming tables. As your legal adviser, I would suggest that you utilize your spare moments in getting absolute possession of this bay gelding."

"And as a friend, what would you advise in regard to Virginia."

"Friend?" Jeremy Lee smiled thinly. "Since when have we been friends? I have no friend. True, we went to military school together. Old family ties and all that. But when you went to West Point, and I chose Mexico as a university of higher education, our paths have gone apart. I am, as my fair cousin so aptly puts it, a trickster, a blackleg, and more or less of a villain. I trust no man. Few men put faith in me. My advice is worthless because I seldom give it without having a selfish motive. I am fettered by no silly codes. I live by my wits, my ability as a gambler at any man's game, and this little toy." He held in the palm of his hand the little derringer pistol.

Lieutenant Clanton stepped back a pace under the glitter of the river gambler's eyes. Jeremy Lee laughed softly.

"I've always wondered why you chose an army career, Harry. You hate guns. You're afraid of this little pistol. Your father was a minister. I can still recall his insipid sermons. In-

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sipid, because the preacher had never done wrong, had never erred, had hidden always behind a barrier of one sort or another. Even as you've been sheltered, from the days when you crept behind your nurse to throw rocks at the poor children in the streets.

"You chose the army as a stepping-stone to wealth. You've had easy tasks because you used influence. You've gone up in rank above better men than you are. You've bought your way, always. And the men who took your money know what you are. A word from me would put you out of the United States army, Clanton. Because the army is a man's game, and you aren't a man. It takes more than an act of Congress to make a man an officer and a gentleman. It takes grit to be a cavalry officer. You've never seen a battle. You've never had a gun shoved into your stomach. You've done paper work at a desk, protected by the shavetails and the yellow-striped gents in blue uniforms that think the United States cavalry is Uncle Sam's toughest branch of the service. Which it is. And those same meat-eating cavalry soldiers have tasted dust, and snow, and hail, and rain, and thirst, on campaigns that you never saw. And with them went officers who died with a saber in one hand and a Colt gun in the other.

"It's men like you, Clanton, that make the civilian hate a soldier. And it is men like Crook and Custer that make the Western men take off their hats when they remember their names. You want advice? Then get it! Get it from a man that's a river gambler, an outcast, a blackleg. A man who claims no one of the virtues. Get out of the army before you're kicked out. You don't belong there, Clanton, any more than I belong in the society of decent men and women. You're a limber-spined quitter. If you were not, you'd knock me down. This little pistol just killed a man. And, Clanton, it may kill you. You ask my advice regarding Virginia Lee. Well, you'll get it. Stay away from my cousin. I reckon you can understand what I mean."

Jeremy Lee's voice had never gone above that cold, impersonal tone that could not be heard fifteen feet away. He was smiling, and his black eyes were as opaque as ever. Lieutenant Clanton's face was drained of color. His pale eyes showed fear. The river gambler smiled crookedly.

"You must be drunk, Jeremy, or crazy," gasped the army officer.

"I think not, Clanton. I'm sober. I hope I'm sane. You rather forced the issue."

"You're a common gambler. A disgrace to your family name. I'll take no orders from you in my personal affairs." Harry Clanton's fists clenched. His white face was twisted with fury.

"That's the first time," said Jeremy Lee coldly, "that I ever saw you show fight. Nurse it along. Then hunt me up. Coffee and pistols for two, old fellow. Any time. Any place. And I hope I won't have to throw any further insults your way to force the duel. Good day, you——"

And Jeremy Lee, having flung the fighting name in the other man's face, strode by him and out the door. He tossed away his cheroot and lit a fresh one. Then he sauntered up the street to the sheriff's office.

CHAPTER XX.

SNAKE TRACKS.

SOME one was singing softly: "Oh, I started up the trail on June the third——"

"Dey's come for ol' 'Snowball,'" grinned the black-faced prisoner in the Fort Benton jail.

"Got your banjo wrapped up?" asked Boone.

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"In a blanket, wropped tight."

Ropes were tossed in. Snowball and Boone made them fast to the window bars.

"All set, you son of a black kittle?"

Snowball grinned happily at the familiar tone, and flung back:

"Hahd and fast. Cowhands, do yoh best!"

A dozen ropes snagged to five iron bars. Stout horses and stout saddle-trees. Wild cowboys and a sickle moon. Some ropes snapped, some held. Iron bent under the stout pressure, pulling loose from the cottonwood logs. Out yonder in the dark a rope got under a horse's tail, and the popping of stirrups told the story of a cowboy who had grabbed for a saddle horn and picked a handful of dirt.

"Three bars off, Snowball. Climb through, you biscuit builder! Are you there, Boone?"

"Here and nowhere else, cowboys." He boosted Snowball through the window and stood there, looking out at the cowboys who grouped around there.

"Rattle your hocks, Boone. We ain't got much time to waste. Somebody's comin'."

"Sorry, boys, but I can't go along. I have to stick here."

"They're aimin' to hang you, pardner."

"Well, I won't be the first man that ever stretched rope. I got some friends kinda dependin' on me to come clear at this trial. If I was to cut and run, it wouldn't be fair to them, savvy?"

The quiet finality of Boone's voice checked any further argument.

Snowball bade Boone a husky so long, then was taken away on horseback. Now a large group of horsemen came slowly toward the jail.

"I reckon," said an SL cowboy, "that here comes our meat. Got a shootin' iron, Boone?"

"Yep. You boys better clear out. I don't want anybody to get shot on my account. I reckon I can make out all right."

"Yeah? What kind of an outfit do you think us SL boys is, Boone? We ain't runnin' from Tex Harmer's skunks."

Now, between the jail and the oncoming riders, rode three men. The sheriff, Ken Hanley, and Jeremy Lee.

Boone climbed out the window, vaulting into the empty saddle of the horse they had brought him. There was a Winchester in the saddle scabbard.

"I reckon I'll go along, boys," he told them. "I'll see you later. One of you men tell the sheriff I made a get-away."

With a wild yell, Boone jumped his horse into a run. He headed for the river.

"Ketch me if you can, Harmer!" he yelled, and rode away in a hail of bullets.

"Looks like the joke is on us," said the sheriff. He pointed to the racing Boone and the angry mob that was in hot pursuit.

"Nothing we can do now," said Ken Hanley. "Dog-gone me if I believed that boy would rabbit on us!"

Now the SL men came up. They grinned boldly at the sheriff.

"Boone chawed them bars apart, sheriff, and got clean away. He's forkin' a horse that can outrun anything around here. One of the horses Till Driscoll bought. Now, ain't it just a dad-burned shame about him runnin' off from a nice, comfortable jail that a way? How do yuh reckon he got out, sheriff?"

"That," said the sheriff, "is somethin' that will probably always remain a mystery." The sheriff's tone was an edge sharp. "Boone shore fooled me. I figgered he was man enough to stay and take his medicine."

"Hold on, sheriff," said one of the SL cow-punchers. "I wouldn't go sayin' that Boone was a coward. The way

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I size up the situation is like this: That Boone didn't want nobody hurt on his account. So he runs for it, and that mob of lynchers a-trailin' him, pourin' bullets at him. He'll lose 'em in the dark. He'll bust that ol' river open wherever he comes to the bank. And I'm layin' odds that not many of them brave and fearless lynchin' gents will foller him into the water. You'll see some more of that cowhand. If he's a coward, then I wish I was one just like him."

"Well spoken," said Jeremy Lee in a flat-toned voice. He lit a cheroot, and the flare of the match showed, for a brief moment, his thin-lipped smile.

"Who might you be?" asked the cowpuncher.

"I might be almost any one, friend. I have been called many names, none of which carried a compliment. I spoke because I was impressed by your loyalty to another man. Loyalty is a virtue I don't possess, but admire in others." The river gambler turned to the sheriff and Ken Hanley.

"Unless you need me, I'll be getting along my way."

The sheriff scowled: "You're a hard cuss to figger out. Judge Lee is a fine man, and you're his nephew, but I'd be lyin' if I said I'd trust you. Whatever your game is, you shore keep your cards close."

"If I didn't, sheriff," said Jeremy Lee, "I'd have been planted in some boot hill long ago. Am I under arrest?"

"I'm sorry," said the sheriff, "but you're not. It looks to me like you're playin' both ends against the middle. You get the Boone gent arrested. Then you side in against your friends that's aimin' to lynch him. Wherever you go, there's snake tracks."

"When a man lives by his wits, sheriff, he must protect himself. I claim no allegiance to any man. I owe no man any debt of gratitude. No man owes me, sheriff, anything but a debt of hatred. Gentlemen, I bid you good night."

Jeremy Lee rode away alone into the night. He was whistling softly as he sat his horse. He came to the river bank and spurred his reluctant mount into the black stream. As horse and man hit swimming water, the river gambler held his gun and cartridge belt above his head so as to keep them dry.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHY? WHY?

WHEN he left the jail, Boone rode hard for the river. The horse between his legs was strong and fast. Between mount and rider was that bond of understanding that only a horseman can know when he feels the strength of bone and muscle and a stanch heart in the horse under him.

Bullets sprayed the night's blackness. Ahead was a high bank. Below, the river muttered and whirled in its channel. Boone lifted his weight in the stirrups. His head lay along the sleek neck.

"Take it, boy, take the water!"

A splash. The crack of guns behind. Boone came to the water's surface, clinging to the tail of the swimming horse. The water was black as a cavern. Bullets cut the swirling river. The quick plunge into the cold water sent the boy's blood pounding. On the high bank behind him he could hear the shouts and profane orders that were not obeyed by the men who dared not tackle the treacherous river in the darkness.

Now a man spurred into the water. But no man followed Tex Harmer as he pushed his horse into the swift current. Alone, the killer of the Harmer clan followed Boone across the black river.

An undercurrent swept Boone and his horse into a whirlpool. For minutes

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man and horse fought the treacherous current. A big cottonwood snag entangled them, and Boone, risking death from the threshing, shod hoofs, swam around the horse and cleared the terrified animal.

Behind him, somewhere on that inky water, Boone could hear the loud breathing of a swimming horse. And the muttered cursing of its rider. Boone reached for his gun. It was gone. The weapon had slid out of its holster. But there was still the Winchester carbine in the saddle scabbard. Boone swam alongside the horse and hung to the saddle horn. The strong current pulled them downstream. Now they were nearing the opposite shore. With a sudden sinking of hope, Boone saw that they were facing a sheer clay bank. It needed every bit of his horse savvy and his cool courage to save himself and the horse from drowning. He slapped his hat against the gelding's head, so as to start the horse downstream. To touch bridle rein now would mean disaster, for few horses can be reined in the water. They will fall backward. Boone now loosened the latigo strap so as to ease off the cinch pressure.

The swimming horse, game of heart in spite of terror, struck out with the current. Boone hung to the long tail. Down, down along that sheer bank, where the clay bluff rose fifty feet against the star-filled sky. The gurgling, muttering current tugged with insidious, slimy clutch at man and horse. Now a whirlpool sucked them below the surface. The horse, ears filled with water, fought with insane fright. Boone, swimming ahead, felt the dangerous nearness of the forefeet of the horse that floundered with terrified desperation. Now a shod hoof grazed Boone's cheek. The fear-maddened animal was on top of him.

Boone dived under. His lungs seemed to be bursting. Blackness, black as only black water can be, enveloped him. His brain spun like a top. Then that terrified struggle of one who is drowning. That smothering sensation. The river whirling him like a submerged bit of driftwood. Then a freak current pulled him to the surface. His lungs filled with air. Water spilled from his mouth and nose. He floundered about. The horse was climbing ashore on a slippery bank. Boone grabbed at some willows and pulled himself up onto a sand bar. There he lay, gasping, half drowned, spouting water.

Now, out there in the black river, a riderless horse swam with empty saddle, fighting the swift currents. The horse snorted and puffed. On downstream. Boone, only half conscious, wondered what had become of the rider. He reckoned it was Tex Harmer who had dared tackle the black river in pursuit. And, half drowned, his head dizzy, his lungs aching, Boone wondered why Harmer so hated him. He had never harmed the Texan. Yet the man seemed more intent on seeing Boone killed than he was bent on killing Jawbone Smith. There must be some strong motive to cause such a desire to kill. The half-drowned boy lay there on the sand bar that was covered with a willow thicket, trying to think. Well, anyhow, he had prevented a bitter fight back at the jail.

Now a cottonwood log, half submerged, floated downstream. And to it clung a man. Boone, peering through the willows, could make out the blot of his head and shoulders. He could hear the labored breathing of the man as he fought to steer the log shoreward. Man and log slid past in the night. Boone reckoned he would land below on the long, sandy bar. Time to be moving along.

Boone scrambled up the bank and caught his horse that stood, reins dropped, up on the bank above the

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water. He tightened the saddle cinch, slid the Winchester from its boot, and rode away. His direction led south along Shonkin Creek, and he rode warily. He figured that probably others of Harmer's posse had got across by now at the easier crossing. The night might hold a score of men eager to shoot him out of the saddle. The heavy-calibered gun weighted his arm, and he laid it across the saddle in front of him as he took in the surrounding country with keen eyes.

This country was familiar to Boone, as he had come to Fort Benton by way of the Shonkin. There was a cow outfit or two that ranged their stuff in here. And he recalled a deserted cabin that was well hidden in the hills at the edge of the Highwoods. He could hide there until the hunt for him died out. Then he would start out to find Jawbone, and when he found him, he would make the renegade talk even if he had to torture the truth from him. Boone had made up his mind to get to the truth of his heritage and learn the mystery that had clouded his boyhood. "Beaver" Brown had said Jawbone was hiding on Shonkin Creek. He'd be mighty well hidden, too. Jawbone was slick about finding a place to hole up. Beaver had tracked him to his hiding place and was watching him. Why? There was another queer kink in it! What did Beaver want of Jawbone? Did he aim to kill him? It didn't look that a way, or he'd have done it before this and fetched in Jawbone for the reward on him, dead or alive. Beaver had some other notion in his shaggy head. Beaver was slick as a fox. A man couldn't trust him too far. Still, he'd slipped Boone that gun there at jail. Boone reckoned the trapper was a little cracked in the brain. A lot of those old trail blazers did queer things. They led queer lives, living alone, for the most part, or with Indians, facing all kinds of dangers, suffering all manner of bitter hardships that would kill ordinary men.

Boone saw a camp fire, but avoided it. He daren't take a chance on riding into strange camps. So he gave the fire a wide berth and kept on. He thought he saw the fire suddenly go out, and it struck him as being odd. He had gone some distance when he caught the sound of a distant rifle shot. He pulled up, listening. But there came no repetition of the shot. Better be movin' along. Let well enough alone, he thought.

And so Boone missed running into Beaver Brown and Jawbone Smith. For it was Jawbone's fire that had suddenly gone out. And it was Jawbone's long-barreled rifle that had cracked the night's silence.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE NIGHT.

NOW, Jawbone Smith was not much of a hand at taking stock in ghosts. But since he had gone crazy drunk and shot Judge Lee, then almost drowned making his get-away across the river, he'd heard things in his sleep that made him wonder if a ghost was a-follerin' him. There was a bullet hole in Jawbone's shoulder that, while it wasn't no ways serious, kept him from sleepin' good. He was afoot, too, and that bothered him, because he always liked a horse near in case he needed to run for it. But there wasn't much danger of ever bein' found here at this old cave in the rim rocks. He'd had foresight, he told himself, to lay in a grub supply and plenty whisky here at the cave. And no man except himself knew its location. Some day before long some cowboy would be riding that way after cattle, and he'd drop him out of his saddle with a bullet between his shoulders. He had plenty of cartridges for the rifle that he'd planted there with the grub and the whisky. Even

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if he didn't have a horse, he was safer here than ridin' the hills, skylightin' hisself.

But at nights, them danged noises kep' him sittin' in the dark, cold shivers chillin' him. And no matter how drunk he got, the noises kep' botherin'. He laid it to the noise of the crick and the wind in the treetops. And daytimes, when he looked around, he couldn't find any sign.

"I must be a-gettin' the jimjams again," he muttered, and built himself a fire to chase away the blackness. He took frequent pulls at his jug, and never let go his rifle. He stared out past the firelight rim until his eyeballs ached. Sometimes, when he couldn't stand it no longer, he'd curse in a croaking voice, challenging that unseen thing that chuckled and muttered just like Beaver Brown used to. And Beaver was dead. Jawbone had killed Beaver, down in New Mexico. He'd shot him and left him for the buzzards, after he'd robbed the dead man's pockets. Now the old son wouldn't stay dead! He'd commenced comin' back of a night to spoil Jawbone's sleep and peace of mind with his eternal chuckling and muttering.

Odd, too, how Beaver's scent was there when the breeze was right. Beaver's clothes always was saturated with animal odors. Kind of a mixture of skunk and muskrat. Sickish sort of smell. It was that smell, and the man's everlastin' chucklin' and mutterin' that drove Jawbone to kill him, as much as it was the gold Beaver kep' in the buckskin sack hung around his middle.

All day long Jawbone's shoulder and his other old wounds had ached fit to drive a man loco. That meant a storm a-comin'. He limped around, stupid with drink, crippled with pains and aches, cursing, and whimpering, and snarling, like some tortured beast. Come dark, he'd ketched that scent in the wind. Muskrat and skunk smell. He took his gun and prowled around over the rocks and through the brush patches. And finally he built a fire, risking the danger of its light being seen. He pulled the corn cob from his jug's mouth and drank heavily. Fear showed in his shifting eyes, and its stamp could be seen on his whisky-blurred face. He had drunk a lot that day. More than his usual amount. He was trying to deaden the pain of his bullet-scarred body, trying to drug his brain until he could crawl up in his rim-rock cave and sleep.

Now, instead of his brain getting numb, it began playing scurvy tricks on him. He could hear Beaver's annoying chuckling and muttering. The odor of musk and skunk hung in the air, filling Jawbone's nostrils, seeping into his brain until he felt smothered. With a sudden fear of the firelight, he took a short-handled shovel and threw dirt on the fire, snarling and whining like a wolf the while. He blotted out the last bit of fire. Now he'd lost the location of his jug, and crawled around on all fours hunting it. Beaver's chuckling seemed close behind him. He staggered to his feet. Something moved, there in that brush. With a thin scream, Jawbone shot at the shadow. He ran toward it, stumbled, fell. Now a heavy weight dropped on him. Hands like steel bands held him close against the ground. His rifle was jerked out of his hands and flung aside. Beaver's chuckling filled his brain. That heavy odor was stifling him, shutting off his wind, smothering him. Something seemed to snap in Jawbone's whisky-warped brain, and he lay there, sobbing, whimpering, his face hidden in the dirt, begging some one, any one, to take away this dead man that was haunting him till he'd gone mad.

Stout deer-hide thongs bound the ankles of Jawbone. Then rough hands jerked him to a sitting position.

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"I been waitin' a long time," cackled Beaver, "to spend a nice evenin' with my ol' pard with meat in my mouth and whisky in the jug. Just me an' ol' Jawbone, him as et my grub, and used my blankets, and got full on my likker. Just me and you, pard."

"Yo're dead!" muttered Jawbone, staring with burning eyes into the darkness. "Yo're dead, I say! I'm just a-dreamin' this. It's the jimmies taken a-holt of me. You ain't there. Beaver Brown is dead!"

"I'm just back for a nice, friendly visit. It gets almighty lonesome for me where I live. So, thinks I, I'll hunt up my ol' pard, Jawbone, and nibble at his jug and smoke his terbaccer."

"You lie, you lie!" croaked Jawbone.

A chuckling muttering came from the darkness. The gurgle of the jug. Jawbone Smith begged for a drink of whisky, but the chuckling and muttering of Beaver Brown mocked him into a whining, snarling rage. Jawbone's shaking fingers fought at the buckskin thongs, but without success. The tiny knot of buckskin, wet before it was tied, would require patience, steady hands, and daylight to unravel. Nor could Jawbone break the twisted bit of wet hide. As well try to break wire.

"Set there, pard," chuckled Beaver. "Set there while ol' Beaver's ghost drinks hearty. Think of the bullet hole you put in pore ol' Beaver as had been your pardner in camp and on the trail. Ol' Beaver, the same as nursed you through fevers and the snakes. Shared his blankets, and his terbaccer, and his grub, and his jug. Then you shot him in the back one night, and robbed his poke. You'll die soon, Jawbone, and burn after. You'll go with the horrors of a hangman's noose. Or mayhap a knife shoved in your carcass, where you'll die hard and slow, and no water or whisky or a friend to mourn your passin'. And the coyotes will pick your bones. As you sow, you'll reap, Jawbone, and you've sowed naught but bad seed."

The whisky set Beaver's tongue to wagging. He babbled on, between drinks, of the old trails and the old camps. He spoke of men long dead, of murdered men who waited to meet Jawbone in the hereafter. Until the listening renegade was groveling in the dirt, not knowing if he listened to man or ghost or the mocking voice of delirium.

Now Jawbone's groping hands gripped the jug. He lifted it with a croaking cry, only to throw it aside with a curse. For the jug Beaver had set where his former pardner would find it was empty.

The empty jug found in the dark but increased the man's bewilderment, and he raved in maudlin fashion.

Apparently, Beaver had had former experiences with Jawbone, when the latter was half crazy from whisky. For he played on the tortured man's feelings as some skilled mechanic might tinker with a bit of machinery. Now and then he put an adroit question. Jawbone would give him reply without knowing he spoke.

For an indefinite time this continued. Now and then Beaver would give the other man a slug of raw whisky. Enough to keep him conscious, afraid, and willing to answer the questions with a truth born of stark terror.

Into the questions and answers were woven the names of men. Judge Lee, Frank Boone, the man whom the judge had killed in a duel. The Harmers. The boy Boone whom Jawbone had raised. A man named Raoul Fouchet.

Until finally Jawbone, with a dull groan, dropped into a stupor.

Beaver Brown took his knife and cut the buckskin thongs. He knelt beside the unconscious Jawbone for some time, the long-bladed knife in his hand, its point touching the pit of Jawbone's stomach. Beaver's shaggy face twitched

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with emotion. His eyes, bright, fox-like, cunning, twinkled and glittered. Finally he rose and slid the unstained hunting knife back into its scabbard. He took a final pull at the whisky jug he had kept for himself, and set it down again.

"In the mornin'," he chuckled, looking down at the man who tossed and whimpered and groaned in his whisky-drugged sleep, "you'll wonder was it a dream or not. And the worry will ripen you for what's comin'. Better for you, Jawbone, if I slid this knife into your heart. Because it'd be more merciful, in the end."

Chuckling and muttering, Beaver slipped away into the night.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BEAVER RIDES SIGN.

FOR Boone, hiding in the hills at the foot of the Highwoods, these next few weeks dragged past with an interminable slowness. And each day, when men rode the ridges on their man hunt, the danger of being discovered and drawn into a gun battle was simply a matter of luck. Because some chance rider might, at any time, come spurring into the brush-filled canyon where the boy was hiding.

Boone wondered a little at the intensity of this man hunt that went on around him. He did not credit himself with such importance that a score of men or more should stay on the hunt so long. He did not guess the truth. That it was Jawbone Smith, not him, that the men were hunting, and that the sheriff of Fort Benton was leading the posse.

There had been a cold-blooded murder there on the Shonkin range. A cowboy had been shot through the back, and his horse stolen by the murderer. Because Jawbone was known to be afoot when he fled from the shooting of Judge Lee, it was but natural to suppose that he had done this second crime. And it was for Jawbone, not Boone, that the posse searched.

Now the truth of Tex Harmer's past was known at Fort Benton. Virginia Lee had recognized the man as one of the road agents, that same evening when Harmer had led his mob to attack the jail. She had met him on the street just before dark, and had remembered his face with its pocked skin when his mask had slipped off. And Harmer knew that the girl had recognized him. He had smiled twistedly and lifted his hat, then moved on.

The day following Boone's escape, Harmer's dead horse was found hung up in a big river snag. Since no man had seen Harmer since he pushed his horse into the black stream after Boone, it was natural to suppose the man was dead. If any one knew otherwise, he kept the information to himself.

Also, another man had dropped from sight. That man was Jeremy Lee, river gambler and nephew of Judge Lee, who was slowly recovering from his bullet injury. Jeremy Lee had ridden away that night of the jail break when the sheriff lost two prisoners and the SL outfit recovered their precious cook. The river gambler vanished.

The sheriff, to the complete satisfaction of the SL outfit, was too busy with the hunt for Jawbone to be concerned over the loss of the Negro cook. The sheriff suggested that they might be doing him a favor by moving on homeward with their horses. They lost no time in taking the hint. And when Till Driscoll and Jawn R., who were starting down the trail, heard of the jail-break that had freed Snowball and Boone, the two trail bosses grinned at one another understandingly. Both men nodded when Ken Hanley 'lowed that cooks these days was scarce articles, and that where a cook was involved, almost any kind of crime to hold him had ought to be overlooked.

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"But it's the Boone cowboy that kinda throwed us into feelin' like we was pore judges of humankind. We reckoned he'd stand his hand."

"And when he didn't," said Till Driscoll, "you can be shore certain the boy had his reasons. And they was strong reasons."

Ken Hanley nodded. "I look for Boone to show up one of these days."

"When he does," said Till Driscoll, "hand him this letter. It has some important information in it concernin' who was his daddy."

"How did you come by the information?" asked Ken Hanley.

"I come acrost a little notebook and some letters that Jawbone must 'a' lost. It tells the tale."

Ken Hanley took the bulky letter. His eyes met those of the trail boss, then turned to the sheriff.

"Here is what we need to cinch our own guess, I reckon. The boy is Frank Boone's son. Driscoll, you and me and Jawn R. and the sheriff had better talk this over. You know what all this will mean for Judge Lee?"

"I do," said Till Driscoll bluntly. "It'll ruin him in politics."

"After all these years, if this thing comes up again," said Ken Hanley, "it'll kill him. I'll hand this letter over to the sheriff and he'll put it in his safe. Will you trust us to do right by the boy?"

"If I didn't trust you," said Driscoll, smiling, "I wouldn't be handin' you the letter for Boone. I've got to be gettin' on back down the long trail, and can't 'tend to it myself. But while both you men are Judge Lee's friends, I reckon you will do right by this boy who has been wronged."

"We'll see that right is right, Driscoll."

"That's all I'm askin'."

"In case the boy gets killed," said Ken Hanley, "what then?"

"Burn what's in that envelope," said the SL trail boss. "What folks don't know, won't never hurt 'em. I've never told any man what is in this envelope."

Ken Hanley nodded. "Young Boone, if he don't get shot, will come into what belongs to him."

He made no mention of the fact that Judge Lee had, when he first regained consciousness, asked for the sheriff and his old friend, Ken Hanley. The judge's face was gray with pain, and his handsome, tolerant, kindly eyes were dark with another pain that struck deeper than any bullet could penetrate.

"Find that young man named Boone. And find Jawbone Smith. A great wrong has been done and must be righted, regardless of what it may cost. Where is Jeremy, my nephew?"

"He's disappeared, judge."

"If you can find him, fetch him to me. In case I should die, there is a package in my safe marked, 'Papers concerning Frank Boone.' They will tell you the story of a tragedy. May God forgive me for the part I have played in that tragedy!"

But the judge was recovering. And no trace had been found of Boone, Jawbone, Tex Harmer, or Jeremy Lee. Though a shaggy-haired, shaggy-bearded man in greasy buckskin, whose foxlike eyes missed nothing of what was going on, might have told of seeing, at different times, each of those four men.

The wily Beaver had witnessed the murder of the cowboy. And he had fingered the trigger of his long rifle when the murderer mounted the horse for the possession of which he had done murder. But he let the murderer go.

"Ride on, Tex Harmer. You'll hang, in the end, for this and other black crimes that your crooked mind has set your hands to do. Ride keerful, Harmer. Ride keerful, you black-hearted skunk!"

It amused Beaver to know that Jawbone was being hunted for a crime com-

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mitted by Tex Harmer. The trapper gained some sort of grisly satisfaction from the error that prompted this fresh man hunt on the Shonkin.

"Be a joke on Jawbone if he was to get killed for Harmer's job."

Beaver, taking care to conceal his own movements, followed Tex Harmer to the killer's first night's camp. Then, while Harmer slept, the moccasined trapper cut the rawhide hobble and set free the killer's stolen horse.

"You'll be afoot for a spell, you pock-marked son of Satan. Aye, and there'll be the chill of fear in your heart when you come on them cut hobbles. For you'll know that whoever set you afoot has let you live apurpose. And you'll wonder when a bullet will ketch you in the back."

Beaver had visited Jawbone later that night. Working his way on foot along the Shonkin, driven by terror from his rim-rock cave, the half-crazy Jawbone was making his way slowly out of that part of the country. And as he traveled, Beaver followed him in the dark. Chuckling and muttering, driving the brain-tortured Jawbone on and on through the nights.

Beaver knew where Boone was camped. Even as he knew that Jeremy Lee now rode at the head of a small band of desperate men, the former followers of Tex Harmer. What or whom that little band of hard-riding outlaws sought, Beaver could only half surmise. It but confirmed the trapper's suspicion that the river gambler was a road agent and a killer. The blackleg scion of a proud family. The handsome gambler was bold, clever, with a pair of quick guns, and a trained brain. Far more dangerous than any of the lesser outlaws, Jeremy Lee. He was a seasoned gambler playing for high stakes.

"When Jeremy Lee meets Boone, and if the breaks are even," chuckled the trapper, "there will be a fight worth the seein'. For while Boone is handier with a gun, he's mighty hot-headed. And Jeremy Lee's nerves is made outa steel. Man, but I must not miss that fight!"

And so, like some impartial spectator, Beaver Brown watched this dangerous game being played. And as Jawbone, fear driven, his whisky gone, crept from rock to bush, from coulee to coulee, half starved, half mad, the trapper counted the miles that he would have to make before he stumbled onto Boone's camp. Or before Tex Harmer, likewise afoot, would meet Jawbone.

Harmer, almost as ragged now as Jawbone in his shredded and soiled finery, was also working toward the Highwoods. But Harmer's way was not Jawbone's way. The Texan was cunning as a wolf, and his trail was the predatory trail of a wolf. He stole food from camps along the Shonkin. He was traveling afoot now by preference. Beaver had found his high-heeled boots discarded in a brush patch and the faint tracks away from that brush patch were made by moccasions. Tex Harmer was feeling his way to the safety that lay beyond the Shonkin range, where a man on horseback traveling alone might be the target for bullets of a sheriff's posse. Wherein showed the canny wisdom of the killer. When Tex Harmer died, he would die hard. Warned by the mysterious theft of the horse he had gained by murder, Tex Harmer would move with caution. Beaver never got within gun range of Harmer now, because the Texan was wily and dangerous. Tex Harmer would strike with the rapidity of a coiled rattler, only he would not warn before he struck.

"Boone," argued Beaver to himself, "can draw a faster gun than Tex Harmer. But he'll never get the chance to draw if Harmer has his say-so. He'll kill the boy without warnin'. There's

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times when I wish I'd dropped that varmint when the chance come my way. But that'd be interferin' with fate. Which brings a man bad luck. And I don't want to be crossin' no bad luck till I see ol' Jawbone get his. Then I'll hole up with whisky and grub and live like a king, trappin' some, just to keep my hand in, drinkin' plenty, eatin' fresh meat, gettin' my livin' from the trap lines strung by the fools as works the north country for Hudson's Bay. Gettin' along about time for to be pushin' north'ards, too. Snow's due in a month or so. Time for ol' Beaver to be headin' north'ards. But I kain't go till I sees the finish here. Which ain't so far off, as I reads the sign."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A MAN OF QUALITY.

IT was getting dusk that evening when Boone heard the sharp crackle of rifle fire, perhaps a mile down the creek. He saddled his horse and examined his Winchester. Hiding his horse in some dense brush, he took the gun and worked his way down toward where the shooting was going on. He had squatted in some buckbrush when a man on foot came up the creek. The man was like some hunted animal. Dodging, crawling, running. His breath was labored, his gait weary and desperate in its effort to make speed. He fell once crossing a clearing, there between the box-elder clumps. Now he fell once more, almost within arm's reach of Boone's hiding place. The man, ragged, bearded, mud-caked, lay there, trying to rise. Boone stepped from his shelter. The fugitive saw him, lifted his gun, then dropped the barrel, so that it did not cover the boy.

"It's me, Jawbone," called Boone cautiously. "Don't you know me, old top?"

"I know you, young un. Otherwise, I'd 'a' killed you. Get, quick! Get outa here! They're after me, blast 'em! They'll be here directly. Get out, boy!"

"Who's comin', Jawbone?" Boone dragged the tottering derelict into shelter. Something in Jawbone's manner swept away the boy's hatred for the man.

"I dunno, Boone! I swear to Heaven, I dunno! I'm dyin', young un. They got me. Gimme some ca'tridges. I'll make a stand here. I'm bad hit. I'll go out a-fightin'. You're a good boy. Always was. I been ornery. Get away, boy, get plumb away! It ain't for you to stay here. Get out! Find Judge Lee. Tell him I sent you. Tell him Jawbone sent you to him. That I never meant to shoot him. I was loco drunk. Thought he was reachin' for a gun and plugged him. Like I done told the ghost of Beaver Brown. You're—— Boy, here they come!"

Boone pulled the stricken, wounded, mud-spattered man into the brush. Rifle bullets sprayed the willows now. Jawbone tried to pull the boy down, begging him to run. But something inside Boone would not let him quit this man, who was more beast than human, a hunted, dying thing smeared with red and mud.

Into Boone's mind and heart swept the memories of those days and nights when Jawbone had treated him with a pitiful sort of comradeship. He could not leave the man here to be shot down. Boone stood up, heedless of danger. He raised his hat above his head, waving it.

"Who are you?" he shouted. "What do you want? There's a man dying here. He's had a-plenty of your lead. For Heaven's sake, hold your fire!"

A lull now in the firing. Then a single shot ripped the silence, missing Boone's head by a scant inch. Tex Harmer's hard voice croaked a profane taunt. Boone dropped to the ground beside Jawbone.

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"We'll give 'em bullet for bullet, pardner," he grimly told the man who was shoving cartridges into his rifle magazine.

Sheltered in the brush and granite rocks, Boone and Jawbone fought off the men who surrounded them. Through the rattle of gunfire sounded Tex Harmer's cold voice.

It was but yesterday that Harmer had been picked up by the men who had followed him along the outlaw trails. Jeremy Lee, riding as their leader, had sighted Tex Harmer traveling on foot. He had ridden alone to where Tex Harmer stood waiting with his hand on his gun.

"I supposed you were dead," the river gambler had said, without the formality of any other words of greeting.

"You supposed wrong, then." Harmer's voice matched the gambler's in coldness. "I'm alive, amigo. And I'm ready any time to settle up with the sneakin' coyote that set me afoot. You know what I'm talkin' about all right. I simply had to kill a man to get that horse."

Jeremy Lee's eyebrows lifted a trifle. "I supposed you were dead, Harmer. We found your dead horse in the river. And there's a sheriff's posse hunting the hills for Jawbone Smith on the supposition that he killed a cowboy to get the cowboy's horse. It seems they accuse brother Jawbone wrongly. I'm glad you told me that you did that cold-blooded job. And don't ever call me a sneaking coyote again, my friend. Don't ever call me any kind of a slurring name, because it will bring you some bad luck. Your hand is on your gun, brother Harmer; I'd like to lay you a bet that I could kill you before you can draw it."

"You're a tricky fellow," snarled Harmer. "I've seen you work. I'll pick my own time to kill you."

The other men came up. Jeremy Lee smiled thinly, never taking his eyes from Tex Harmer.

"Harmer," said the river gambler, "there can be only one leader in the wolf pack. I'll fight you for it, or I'll be willing to let our pack of rogues decide which of us shall lead them on to further crimes. Which will it be? Fight or vote?"

"Let the boys decide," said Tex Harmer. "Whoever they pick, goes with them. The other man pulls out, alone."

Tex Harmer's sinister face lighted up. He knew that they followed Jeremy Lee only for lack of a better leader. These human wolves did not trust this polished gambler, who often angered them with his contemptuous sarcasm. They feared and distrusted a man who had been born and reared among gentlefolk. Tex Harmer was their own kind. They could understand his talk and his ways.

"Well, thieves and cutthroats," said Jeremy Lee, "decide."

"We'll foller Tex Harmer," said one of them. "We was with him at Red Rock, and we'll stay with him here. You're kinda high-toned to be herdin' with us fellers that don't know how to eat with more than one fork. You've rawhided us and sneered at us and made us take it. You better ride on, Mister Tinhorn."

Either by chance or premeditation, Jeremy Lee had so maneuvered his horse that his back was to a clay cut bank. He faced them now with lips that twisted with contempt and eyes that glittered with a killer's cruelty. The member of the outlaw band who had spoken so boldly was a heavy-faced giant, bearded, unwashed, half drunk. The gambler's silence, mistaken for timidity, prompted the man to further words. He felt, perhaps, that Jeremy Lee would now take insults in the face of such odds.

"Ride on, tinhorn. Take your fancy words, and high-toned ways, and dude

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clothes, and drift yonderly. We got ol' Tex back. We'll foller him to the end."

"You will, indeed, my unbathed *compadre,*" said Jeremy Lee. "For once in your life, you've unwittingly spoken the truth. Eternity's gates stand ajar waiting for your coming. You called me a tinhorn. I'm giving you about three seconds to say you lie. Say it or pull that gun, you——"

With a snarl, the man's gun slid into sight. Jeremy Lee's right hand moved in a short arc. Two spurts of red from the little derringer, and the big outlaw, with a choking oath, slid from his saddle, shot thorugh the head.

Now a long-barreled six-shooter filled each of the river gambler's hands. One gun covered Tex Harmer.

"Now, you pack of mongrels," said Jeremy Lee, "who takes up that fool's job of killing me? Make a move, any of you, and these guns begin talking. Tex Harmer will get the first bullet square in the heart. Around and 'round the little ball goes, and where it stops, nobody knows. Step up, gents, and place your bets."

The gambler's lips taunted them, mocked them, insulted them. His slitted black eyes held them with their glitter. No man dared move.

"You needed a horse and saddle, Harmer," he finished. "I've just given you one. Now get out of here, all of you. Ride on, you pack of mongrel-bred dogs! You chose to follow Tex Harmer. Follow him, then."

Tex Harmer dared not risk the chance of pulling his gun. His pocked face white and twisted, he mounted the horse from the back of which the river gambler had just shot a man. He rode away, his men following.

Jeremy Lee, his back to the clay cut-bank, watched them ride away. The gambler's handsome face was masklike. When they had gone, he dismounted and searched the pockets of the dead man. What he found, he wrapped in the dead man's silk neckscarf and stowed in his saddle pockets. Then he covered the dead man's face and rode away alone, erect in the saddle as a cavalry officer on parade.

So Tex Harmer came back into command of his renegade pack. And on the next day they had jumped Jawbone Smith, as that half-starved, half-mad outlaw was making his way on foot toward the Highwoods.

So Tex Harmer and his men now surrounded Boone and Jawbone. And from a brush-covered knoll, Beaver Brown watched the fight through a pair of army binoculars.

Beaver saw Tex Harmer throw his men in a circle around the spot where Boone and Jawbone fought grimly under the hissing, whining, snarling bullets that clipped the brush and spattered the sand rocks.

Now he saw a rider on a black horse coming swiftly out of the dusk. The rider swung out of the saddle and came on afoot, his rifle ready. He was passing up the creek within a stone's throw of where Beaver squatted. The trapper lifted his nasal voice.

"Come up here, Jeremy Lee."

The river gambler dropped from view behind some rocks. "Who are you?"

"Skeered ye, did I?" chuckled the trapper. "Who be I? That's a hard question. I'm no friend of Tex Harmer's, lay your coin on that bet. And I'm no friend of Jawbone's, for that matter. But there's twenty of them varmints to two. And Jawbone's hit bad. I was just about to whittle down them odds with my meat getter when you popped into sight, skylighted fair and purty. Come up here, young feller, and we'll augur out a campaign, soldier-like."

Something in the cracked voice allayed the gambler's fear of treachery. He climbed through the brush and

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rocks, to find the buckskin-clad trapper puffing an evil-smelling pipe, his long rifle across a rock, the field glasses in his bony hands.

"You been ridin' these hills for weeks, yet you turn up a-lookin' like a beaver hat just took out of a band box. That's quality, son. And it's ol' Beaver Brown as admires quality in a man. Squat lower, or you'll draw gunfire, mayhap. Light up your pipe."

Jeremy Lee smiled. Without a word, he handed the trapper one of his long cheroots.

"If it is downright necessary to smoke," he told Beaver, "use a decent weed."

"And the pleasure, Jeremy Lee, belongs to me. I run out of plug and been smokin' kinnikinnick, which I borrows off of some Injun friends. And the stuff ain't to my likin'. I've been raised on good natural leaf terbaccer and corn likker as was aged in hickory wood. Bad 'baccy and bad likker is my lot now. And I kin add, bad company, save for the present company o' yourself, Jeremy Lee."

The river gambler chuckled. Here was a character who pleased his fancy. Between the two men, for all their difference in bearing, was a quickly made bond of understanding.

"You know me," said Jeremy Lee, when the trapper handed him the field glasses.

"Since you was knee-high to a prairie dog. I knowed your father. Fit under him in the war."

A quick look from the gambler. Beaver chuckled.

"He was killed," said Beaver, "in Mexico. I've stood by his grave down there."

"Then you know who——"

"I know nothin', Jeremy Lee, excep' that I keep my tongue from waggin', and I don't go askin' money from men to keep me from talkin'. I've got many a fault, Jeremy Lee, but blackmailin' ain't among 'em. I knowed your daddy, and once, down in Mexico, he saved my worthless hide. Down yonder in the brush with my ol' pard Jawbone is a lad they call Boone. Do you know who his daddy was?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"You come here, mayhap, to kill him?"

"No. Quite the contrary. I'll chance a few bullets to yank him out of this uneven fight. I'm after Tex Harmer."

"Supposin' the lad called Boone gets back to Fort Benton?"

"So much the better," replied the gambler. "That's where he belongs. He'll get fair play and what belongs to him."

"What about you?"

"I'll go back down the same river that I traveled up. But before I go, there's a debt or two to pay off with a gun."

"Meanin' who?"

"Meaning Tex Harmer for one, Jawbone Smith for the other. That will balance my books."

"And then you'll be a-goin' down the river again?"

"There will be no other alternative after Boone returns to Fort Benton."

"But if Boone was to get killed, what then, Jeremy Lee?"

"I might stay."

"Dependin', mayhap," said Beaver, a sly twinkle in his foxlike eyes, "on what a certain young lady had to say?"

"Perhaps," said the river gambler softly, "you're right. But if we can kill off Harmer, the others of his scurvy band will run. And Boone will be saved from being killed or having to kill Tex Harmer. Even if Boone killed Tex Harmer—which he most surely will if ever he gets to line his sights on the blackguard—that killing will mar something very wonderful in his life and the life of a certain young lady."

"This here young lady don't fancy killin's?"

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"Because the judge's sorrow over a tragic duel he once fought, and his own recent shooting, has put a horror of guns and bloodshed in her heart."

"And while this here young lady is almighty fond of Boone, she'd mayhap lose that fondness if he turned out to be a killer?"

"That's the point. And I think we'd better be taking a hand in yonder battle before it's too late."

"Aye, Jeremy Lee. And for all as may be said against you, I'll say you're a brave man and a good loser if ever I see one. It takes quality in a man to do as you're doin'. Let's get goin'!"

CHAPTER XXV.

"SO LONG, PARDNER."

AS best he could, Boone tied up Jawbone's wounds. The renegade thanked him. Indeed, it was one of the few thanks Jawbone had ever given the boy.

That circle of gunfire was closing tighter on the two trapped fighters. An hour yet until darkness, and Harmer would try to finish them before then so as to prevent them from slipping away in the gloom. Boone kept trying to sight Tex Harmer.

"Oncet we get him," Jawbone had gritted, "his pack of coyotes will travel on. There's a sheriff's posse been ridin' the hills, and this shootin' may draw 'em. Which ain't to Tex Harmer's likin', for he's yaller plumb down his back. I'd like for to ketch sight of him while I'm still able for to draw a steady bead. Ain't got long to live, and I'd like just one—— Listen!"

Above the din of rifle fire sounded a wild, plainsman's yell, Indianlike in its high-pitched ferocity. Jawbone's eyes grew wide with fear.

"You heard that yell, young un? It's ol' Beaver Brown's ghost as has been a-follerin' me, drivin' me mad. It's Beaver's war whoop. Hear it?"

"Plenty plain, Jawbone. But it's no ghost. Beaver is alive."

"Don't you ever think that. Beaver's dead. I killed him twenty years ago, in New Mexico. He drove me to it with his eternal gabblin' and cacklin'. And that's him as waits for me yon side of the black river. It's my judgment a-comin'! I'm a-dyin' and ol' Beaver'll be waitin' for me. He's trailed me for weeks, I tell you, knowin' my time to die was a-comin'. It's my dues, for I done murder. Black murder it was, young un, and it's black murder as is charged to me on the Big Book—— Hear the ol' varmint yell!"

Beaver was doing more than yelling. From rock to brush patch, his gun spewing fire, his lanky frame twisting and dodging grotesquely, he came leaping.

His wild war cry had something of that coyote cry that multiplies in volume until one would wager a dozen of the animals were yelping. There was a terrifying bloodthirstiness to its savage notes that made Boone shiver. Now, Tex Harmer's men, suddenly grown panicky when they learned this new danger that menaced, and deceived by Beaver's multiple-sounding yells, took to their horses. Tex Harmer, cursing them, shouted futile orders, then was forced to follow them in their flight.

He spurred his horse to a run. Just as Jeremy Lee, mounted on his powerful black, met him face to face. Their guns roared at almost the same instant. Red stained the river gambler's cheek. Tex Harmer lurched in his saddle, his pocked face twisted, his gun dropping from a hand that hung useless, the arm smashed at the wrist. As his left hand went for his second gun, the river gambler, cool as a man at target practice, shot again. Tex Harmer's twisted mouth was snarling. His left arm was smashed below the shoulder. Helpless, he could not even guide his unruly

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horse. He lost his balance and was thrown into some bushes. Jeremy Lee was out of the saddle and on the ground, tying the outlaw's legs.

"I'll be back directly, my amigo," he told the snarling prisoner. "I've no intention of letting you die of your wounds. You're slated to stretch rope."

Jeremy Lee and Beaver met. Together they rode toward the rocks where Boone stood, his rifle in his hands. His gray, black-flecked eyes were hard, suspicious, as he recognized Jeremy Lee.

"I just saw you down Tex Harmer," he said to the river gambler. "What is it you want of me? If it's to go back to Fort Benton, that's where I'm goin', but I'm goin' alone."

"That," said Jeremy Lee, "is your privilege, so far as I'm concerned. Myself, I'm not returning there, so will you hand Tex Harmer over to the authorities? Where is Jawbone Smith?"

"Jawbone," said Boone simply, "has gone. He's crossed the Big Divide. I'll take care of his body."

"That is as it should be."

"You treated me almighty shabby, there at Fort Benton," said Boone, "but you and Beaver has just saved my life. A man can't discount that. I'm thankin' you both."

"My friend," said Jeremy Lee, "when you return to Fort Benton, there will be no charges for you to face. Lieutenant Clanton has, by this time, departed for another climate, and will have resigned from the army. The horse you left at Judge Lee's ranch will be your property. I've learned he was stolen from the army post by Tex Harmer. Jawbone, in turn, stole that horse and another one from Harmer. So that settles that case.

"Concerning the Red Rock bank robbery, Tex Harmer engineered that and threw the blame elsewhere to shield himself. He'll hang. You're cleared of that charge.

"Regarding the shooting of Judge Lee, I can say only this to defend myself against the bad treatment accorded you. The night of our afternoon's meeting at the river, I set out to gamble. I happened to overhear Jawbone Smith and a man named Pete discussing the shooting of one 'Big Nose,' who had been set to watch you. Also, they mentioned a well-laid plot to blackmail Judge Lee. They were to use you as the proverbial monkey, as it were, to drag the chestnuts from the fire. I had no way of knowing, just then, how deeply you were involved in the plot. That dying man had spoken to you, mentioning one Tex Harmer, whom I knew to be a killer and an all-around blackguard.

"I listened carefully, and I made my plans. To save Judge Lee, I would stay in Fort Benton. He had taken me, an orphan, and raised me. Educated me. Saw me turn from decency to a gambler who lived by his wits. I saw a chance to return, perhaps, a little of the generosity, tolerance, and understanding Judge Lee had shown me. I knew that there was a hidden chapter in his life that concerned the duel he fought with Frank Boone, a Kentuckian. And to guard him from harm, I stayed in Fort Benton to wipe out the men who sought Judge Lee's ruin. My job is done. What I have done, be it right or wrong, I have done to save the honor of one of the finest men who ever lived. When I thought you were against him, I was against you. When I learned that you were innocent, wholly ignorant of the plot that so involved you, I was glad to help you as well as Judge Lee.

"In Fort Benton, Judge Lee is waiting to see you. A friend of yours named Till Driscoll has left a letter for you with the sheriff. Get it and read it before you go to see Judge Lee. And now, my friend, I'll be going my way. Beaver will help you with Tex Harmer, and Jawbone's body."

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The river gambler smiled. "I'm going down the river. I don't reckon that our trails will ever again cross. I would like to shake hands in farewell. I would like to wish you happiness in the new life that is opening for you."

"And I wish you luck," said Boone, moved by the gambler's manner. They silently gripped hands. Jeremy Lee shook hands with Beaver, then rode away into the gathering darkness.

"Fate," chuckled the trapper. "Trails cross in mighty queer places. Let's pick a good spot to plant our ol' pard Jawbone. Then we'll move on to town with Tex Harmer. Take a look at his hurts, laddie, while ol' Beaver rides to his camp for a shovel. I'll be back by moonshine, and we'll plant ol' Jawbone deep with a nice granite rock for a headstone. He went out with his boots on and his gun a-smokin', did ol' Jawbone. A-thinkin' ol' Beaver was waitin' for him where he's gone."

Beaver Brown rode away, chuckling and muttering. Boone bandaged Tex Harmer's two wounds and held a hatful of water to the suffering man's lips. The killer did not even trouble to thank Boone.

When Beaver returned with the shovel, the moon was up. Boone and the trapper dug a deep grave and buried Jawbone. While Beaver started for Fort Benton with the prisoner, Boone lingered at this unmarked grave.

Bareheaded, he stood there. He owed little to the dead renegade. Yet, now that the man was dead, a loneliness crept into the heart of the boy, who was nineteen before he knew that the renegade outlaw was not his father. Now, Jawbone was dead. In Fort Benton there awaited him some message. Boone knew now that, in some manner, his future lay with Judge Lee. There, in this historic town at the head of navigation on the Missouri River, lay the solving of the mystery that shrouded Boone's parentage. Judge Lee had killed a man named Boone in a duel. Perhaps that man had been his father. Eager to get this puzzle solved, Boone would be leaving this fresh grave in a few minutes.

"God," he spoke softly to the stars, "some ways, Jawbone was good to me. The whisky done it. I reckon you'll kinda understand how he wasn't responsible. So far as I'm concerned, there's nothin' to say against Jawbone."

Boone laid a hand on the granite rock that marked the new grave.

"So long, Jawbone, old pardner. Rest quiet."

CHAPTER XXVI.

GOOD-BY, GUNS.

AT Fort Benton, Boone turned over Tex Harmer to the sheriff. Beaver Brown had quit Boone before they crossed the river.

"Yonder, among quality folks, laddie," Beaver had said, "lies your trail. Mine goes on. You'll be seein' me no more, for I'm stayin' clear of you and yourn. Tell Judge Lee that Beaver Brown, him as he met on the Miles City stage road that day, holds no bad will agin' him. That I never did. And that I was not mixed up in the blackmail plot with Fouchet, Jawbone, and the others. They're dead now, the pack of 'em. Jawbone went last, which was fittin' an' proper, as he was the toughest of the lot. So long, laddie, and good luck."

The sheriff greeted Boone warmly. "Knew you'd come back, once I figgered out why you quit jail. Well, them SL boys has the wrinkles took outa their stomachs now, I bet." He chuckled and spun the combination of his safe.

"Here's a letter from Till Driscoll. Sit here and read it. I'll be gone for a while."

Boone took the letter. His eyes met those of the sheriff. The older man puffed hard at his cigar.

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"Somethin' kinda tells me, sheriff," said Boone, "that what is in this letter is gonna make Judge Lee and his daughter almighty sad. From what I've picked up, here and there, I'm kinda connected with a man named Boone who was killed by Judge Lee."

"Frank Boone," said the sheriff, "was your father. Lee killed him in a fair duel. Lee was in the hospital for a long time. Frank Boone lived a week. Durin' that week, while he lived, he made his will. He settled up his affairs and died, leavin' an only son, whose mother was dead. That son was a little codger, christened Daniel in honor of the old scout who, while probably no kin, was a man good enough to name a boy for. You are that Daniel Boone."

"That," said Boone, "is all that I need to know, I reckon."

There was a fire going in the stove, for the morning was a chilly one. Before the sheriff could stop him, Boone tossed the unopened bulky envelope into the fire. He smiled at the sheriff, an odd look in his flecked eyes.

"That finishes that, sir."

"Hang me for a hoss thief, young man, if you ain't a queer un! I wonder if you know what's burnin' up there in that stove?"

"No, sir, not exactly. I only know that it's buryin' somethin' for keeps that's better for its bein' buried." He held out his hand to the law officer.

"I'll be a-driftin' along, I reckon."

"Where do you aim to go, boy?"

"I don't know. Just along the trail, I reckon."

"Judge Lee and his daughter want to see you. It wouldn't be fair not to see him, son. Will you go?"

"If he wants it that a way, and you think I should go see him, I'll go."

Boone got on his horse and rode to the Lee home, to which the injured man had been moved. It was a tall brick house, with cupolas, and a large lawn shaded by big cottonwoods. Even as Boone stepped off his horse, Virginia Lee came down the walk to the gate. At sight of Boone she halted. Then, with a glad cry, she came running.

"My father's prayers and mine are answered," she said, tears in her eyes. "You've come back to us. And you'll stay." She took both his hands in hers, dragging him along the walk.

Boone, embarrassed, his emotions whirling, let himself be thus led up the steps and onto the veranda where the judge sat in a big chair propped with pillows. The judge's face worked with emotion, and his handsome, kindly eyes spoke volumes as he gripped Boone's hand, and Virginia pushed a chair toward the embarrassed cowboy.

"God has been kind in returning you to us, son. You understand that this is now your home. That what is mine is likewise yours. But it is something other than material things that I will try to give you. Through my fault your boyhood years have been worse than wasted. You know the story by now, of course?"

"I know that Frank Boone was my father, sir. The letter at the sheriff's office I burned without openin'."

"Why, sir?" asked the judge, smiling.

"Because I reckoned what was in it would hurt you and Miss Virginia, and I reckoned you'd suffered a-plenty."

"And you were going away, I'll bet, without seeing us? Am I right?" asked Virginia.

"I figgered that was the best thing to do. The sheriff showed me I was wrong. So here I am. But I won't bother you, sir. I reckon that bringin' up old memories like it does, seein' me, won't help make you-all happy. And I'm just a cowboy with no book learnin' or manners."

Judge Lee gripped Boone's arm. "Hear what I have to say, my boy. Then, if you wish, I'll let you go."

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Virginia pulled up a chair near Boone's. The judge smiled at the boy and girl, his eyes a little misty.

"Frank Boone was my friend," the judge began, "and we had been friends a long time, when politics, and the war, and a complication of things, pushed that friendship apart and salted the wound of its severing with a foolish enmity. That enmity was not of Frank's doing, nor of mine. My adopted brother, Jeremy, was the cause of it. He had always hated Frank Boone. And Jeremy was cruel, clever, and vindictive. He was much like his son, whom you've met. He hid his good side under a cold exterior. He was a gambler and a border buccaneer. It was Jeremy who forced the duel on Frank and me. We were both hot-tempered, quick to resent an insult.

"We met. We fought. You know the result. I lived, but Frank died. Before he died, he made his will. That will left everything to his son Daniel, a mere baby who, being motherless, was being cared for at a friend's home. The last will and testament drawn up left Frank Boone's estate to his son. And, oddly enough, I was made sole guardian and trustee. Frank trusted me. And, knowing that he was going to die, he realized his folly and mine. And he knew that, if the boy were given into my charge, I would do all in my power to care for the child. I was to rear Daniel as my own son, understand, and give him a home, and love, and all that makes for a boy's happiness and future success as a man.

"I was so badly hurt that it was many weeks before I learned of Frank's death and this last will he had made. When the will was read to me, I made all arrangements to take Frank Boone's son into my home. Virginia was not yet born, and my wife and I were anxious to take Frank's son as our own.

"I sent for the child, only to learn that Frank Boone's son had died. My foster brother, Jeremy, gave me the details of the child's death. I believed him. The duel had wrecked my health and happiness. I was a broken man. Broken in health and in hopes. Knowing that Frank forgave me was all that kept me from taking my own life. At the advice of my friends, I left the South and came here to Fort Benton. The courage and loyalty of my wife were things to make any man believe in God and the Mother of God.

"Now came a letter from Mexico, telling me of my foster brother Jeremy's death. He was killed somewhere down there. Before he died, he mailed a letter to me. In this letter he begged my forgiveness for his misdeeds. And he informed me that Frank Boone, before he fought the duel, had made out a statement to be given his son in case he was shot to death. This statement was a farewell letter to his son. In that letter he commanded that son to avenge his father's death. The son should be trained in the use of guns, then he should hunt me down and kill me."

The judge's grip on the boy's arm tightened. Boone saw the old grief line the man's face.

"My father left me such a letter, sir?"

"It was among the letters Jawbone carried. But Frank Boone, perhaps, never composed it. I've now begun to wonder if it was not a forgery. But to get back to Jeremy's last letter. It told me that Frank Boone's son was not dead, but alive, and was being cared for by a man who had been Frank's orderly in the war. This man, one of Quantrell's raiders, now turned outlaw, had Frank's son, and was rearing the boy to be a killer. So that, if I did not pay ransom to this man and his cronies, they would hold the boy in readiness to shoot me down.

"That was the first information concerning the living boy who was Frank Boone's son. Then, after my foster

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brother's death, other letters came. Sinister letters, telling me of the boy's marksmanship, his temper when angry, his adaptability to the evil companionship that was now his lot. And always the writer hinted that some day he would come to collect what belonged to the boy under the threat of that boy's guns.

"I'd sent for Jeremy's son after his father's death. I educated him and gave him a home. But I began to mistrust him. I have never been able to understand him. And when he asked my permission to pay court to my daughter, I refused him flatly. He was so angry I feared he would attack me. He left my roof and became a river gambler and Heaven knows what else.

"Then I got a letter from him. A strange letter. It stated that he knew the band of outlaws who were threatening me. And that if I would let him pay court to Virginia, he would locate Frank Boone's son for me and would put an end to this blackmail band.

"In desperation, I replied, telling him to come to Fort Benton and talk this over with me. Those letters were becoming more frequent, more bold in their threats. They taunted me with the fact that I had invested Frank Boone's money in this ranch on the Teton. That I had misused funds belonging to this young man who was coming to call for his accounting. Coming with a gun.

"The rest," said Judge Lee, "you know—how that Jawbone fellow attacked me, of Jeremy's part, all of it. Now it is settled. And if you would like to bring happiness into the heart of a man whose burden of grief has been hard to bear, you will make your home with us. The ranch belongs to you. The Hanleys, you will find, are the best on earth. Virginia has helped me pray that you would come back to us for always. You'll grant our prayers, son?"

Boone tried to speak, but his voice choked in his throat. With an odd smile, he unbuckled his gun belt and handed it to the girl.

"I wonder," he said, his voice shaking, "if I could swap this for a few books?"

Virginia nodded, her eyes misty. With a quick little sob, she was in his arms. The judge, his face radiant, slipped from his chair and tiptoed into the house.

And so Boone, the drifting cowboy, found the end of his trail.

THE END.

In Next Week's Issue, "THE LAST FLAPJACK," by KENNETH GILBERT.

GOLD IN MATTIE MINE

AN interesting report of a gold strike in Mattie Mine, near Idaho Springs, Colorado, has been received from R. R. Mitchell, president and general manager of the Mattie Consolidated Mines, Inc. This strike was made in virgin ground on a section of the property that had not been explored before.

The ore seems to be of favorable commercial value as carlot shipments average five hundred and twenty-five dollars in gold per ton after freight and treatment charges have been paid. Already a large force of men are employed, and the mill on the property is being enlarged.

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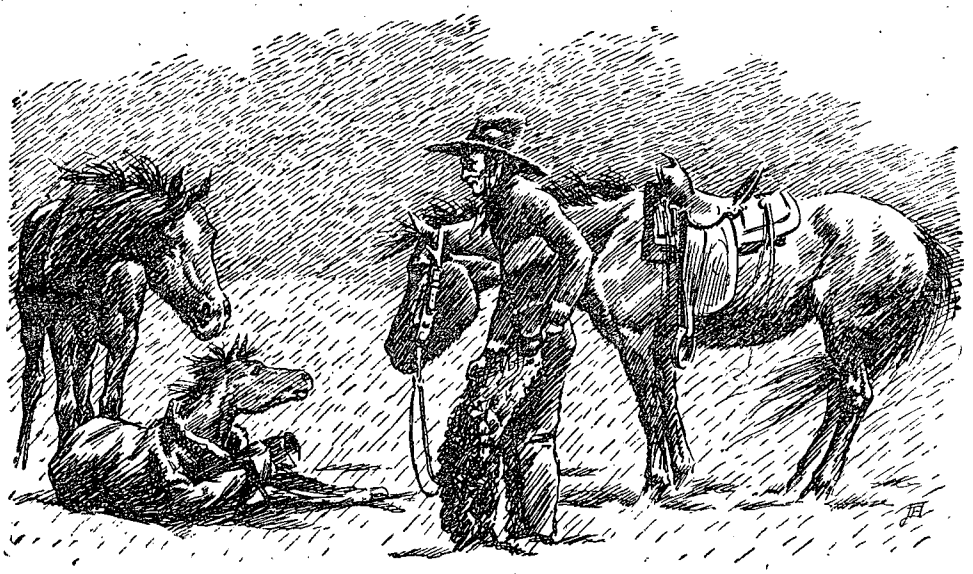

The Silver Streak

By George Cory Franklin

Author of "On Horse Thief Trail," etc.

A BONY mare turned her tail to the spring blizzard which was sweeping down from the Sangre de Cristo and muzzled the little soft, wheezing bundle tucked under the edge of a scrubby buck brush. She nickered encouragement to the colt and shivered as a particularly vicious blast tore at her trembling flanks. Queen had left the rest of the band the night before, when instinct had warned her that she must not remain longer on the high ridges. Heavy as she was, the trip had been a hard one, and she had not been able to reach the shelter of the spruce forest below before the colt had been born, and now with this unseasonable blizzard sweeping down upon them there was little hope for the colt. The mare would have stayed beside her baby until both froze to death had not Clayt Lawton, owner of the Two Bar Two, happened to cut across this way looking to see if the grass had grown enough so that he might start the cattle that had been wintered in the valley up onto the summer range.

Clayt saw the plight of the mare, and sympathy for her struggled with hatred for her owner as he saw the J. B. connected on the hip of the shivering animal.

"You poor old thing," Clayt said, "it ain't your fault that you wear the brand of the cruelest skunk on the Rio Grande." He took off his big, fleece-lined, canvas coat, wrapped the colt up in it, and climbed back onto his horse. "Come on, old lady," he said. "I'll help you down to where you was tryin' to go."

Queen walked close behind the cowboy as he bore her precious offspring down toward timber line. The wind, as if enraged at the loss of so helpless a victim, howled about the peaks above

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them, and sent blasts which tore like angry wolves against the sides of the horses. The colt squirmed after the fashion of newly-born babies, and Clayt shifted his long, lithe body into a position which made the little horse ride more comfortably. The cowboy's sympathy with and his understanding of animals had given him a peculiar power over horses. No man, in all this region of superb horsemen, could gentle one or teach him so quickly the exacting work of a cow pony as could this lanky, blue-eyed cowboy.

Even now, having given his coat to her baby, he reined Chief to a slow walk, so as not to hurry the anxious mother beyond her failing strength. Frequently, he stopped and permitted her to rest for a moment as they made their way through the storm and down the slope. At timber line he led the way around a hillside and into a sheltered basin below a high cliff. Here the wind did not blow, and with the quick changeableness of Colorado spring weather, the sun burst through the clouds and shone fiercely for a few minutes.

Clayt laid the colt on the dry grass below the cliff in the warmest spot he could find, and shook the snow from his coat before he put it on again.

"There you are," he told the mare. "I'll bet you had some such place as this in your mind when you tried to come down. It's right warm in here. The grass is big and green along that little creek. If you keep off the ridges there won't any mountain lions smell you, and you can raise your baby without bein' bothered none a-tall." Then Clayt rode away down the gulch.

The mare hastened to where the colt lay and muzzled him, nickering softly; the colt raised his head, and after a few kicks he managed to stand up and hunt for his natural food. No old toper, exhilarated by his morning's cocktail, ever got more thrill out of a drink than did the baby colt out of his first breakfast. The hot milk warmed him even more than did the occasional outbursts of sunshine. After his third meal, all taken within the hour in which Clayt had left him by the cliff, he even attempted a small adventure to the cliff itself, and as his wabbly legs failed to stop him in time, he got his first lesson in the school that was to make him the most celebrated horse in the valley. He pitched forward, bumping his head against the cliff so hard that he fell over and lay quiet for a long time. The sun had formed a rift larger than usual in the overhanging clouds, and the colt was well content to lie stretched out soaking up the welcome heat, while his mother contentedly cropped the luscious green grass of the little park.

The colt's first summer was spent in this park. Clayt often saw the mare and the colt as he rode across the divide from his summer camp on frequent trips to the Two Bar Two. He began to look forward to the spot with interest as he saw the colt grow from a wabbly, awkward creature into a well-shaped young horse. "He'll sure be a plumb dandy some day," Clayt decided, as he lay on a sunny hillside far enough away so that the mare and colt would not catch his scent, and watched them through a pair of field glasses. "If they belonged to anybody but Jake Bane I'd try to buy 'em and raise that colt for a Sunday hoss. He's sure got the makin's of a toppy one."

Jake Bane, owner of the J B connected, brand and ranch, was avoided by the cattlemen of the region. None of the younger cowboys would work for him because of his reputation, not only as a hard, grasping, stingy man, but because of what is a greater crime in the minds of the rollicking sons of the range —selling the hay from his meadows instead of feeding it to his animals; providing no sheds for their protection; overworking his saddle stock; and;

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above all, because of his brutality to Juan Trujillo, a half-breed boy that gossip said Bane had stolen from a Mexican over on the San Juan River.

Of all the men who rode this range Bane hated Clayt Lawton most, because Clayt ignored him, gave him no cause for a quarrel, and while strictly observing Bane's range rights, forced him to respect those of the Two Bar Two. The fall before they had clashed over the ownership of a fine white-faced calf which Bane claimed. The other cattlemen were about to let Bane brand the calf, rather than to have trouble with him, when Clayt rode up.

"Turn that calf loose," he ordered, "and let him find his mammy!"

Bane walked toward the Two Bar Two owner, a hot branding iron held threateningly.

"Since when did you get to be range boss?" he demanded.

Clayt's lips became a rigid line of white across his bronzed face. "Don't do anything you'll be sorry for, Bane," he remarked, in a voice so low that only those men near by caught the words. "You'd better put that iron down before you get hurt."

Furious at being defied by Clayt, Bane rushed toward him, the iron pointed directly at the face of the cowboy.

"Look out, Clayt!" yelled Dan Mason. "He's crazy mad, don't take any chances with him!"

Clayt was taking a chance, however. He had his reason for permitting Bane to come close. None of the others had seen Clayt slip his right foot from the stirrup and swing his leg freely beside his horse. The hot iron was within a foot of the cowboy's face when something happened. Bane's head snapped backward as the toe of Clayt's riding boot caught him under the chin. The iron was tossed in the air and fell across Bane's body as he lay flat on his back. Instantly, Clayt leaped to the ground, threw the iron away, and smothered the fire which had already caught Bane's ragged jumper.

"Why didn't you let the murderin' skunk burn?" Mason asked. "He sure had it comin' to him."

"Then I'd 'a' been no better than he is," Clayt answered. "I'm not takin' any advantage of him. When we clash, which we're goin' to do some day, we'll both be on our feet, and I'm figurin' we'll be facin' each other."

The calf over which the encounter had occurred had trotted away and was sucking a Two Bar Two cow. Clayt motioned toward it.

"There's proof enough that he'd steal it if he got a chance!" he said grimly.

For the next three years after Clayt had carried the colt to safety, he kept a sharp lookout for the yearling and his mother. They had wintered well and were fat and slick when he again saw them. The colt had just stepped from the shelter of the woods and stood with head held high, testing the air with wide-spread nostrils. Suddenly he charged across the park directly toward a low bush. A long, tawny body sprang from behind the sheltering shrub into the branches of a near-by spruce, while the young horse screamed with anger and leaped back, striking at the branches which bent under the weight of the lion.

"Why, the nervy fellow!" Clayt exclaimed. "I've heard of range horses that would scrap a tree kitty, but that's the first time I ever saw one do it. Gee, ain't he pretty? I'd give a hundred dollars for that pony!"

"Does the señor mean that?" inquired a low voice so close as to cause the cowboy to start in surprise.

"Why, hello, Juan!" Clayt said. "I didn't hear you ride up. You bet I mean it. I've known that horse since the day he was born, and he sure has more pep than any horse I ever saw."

Juan's black eyes flashed. "He is

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one fury," said the half-breed. "Look close there at the edge of his mane. See that long streak of white?"

Clayt nodded. "I wonder how he got that?"

"It was last year when Bane branded him," Juan explained. "The colt, he no squeal like mos' horses under the iron, but when he get loose he charge Bane, jus' like now he go after *el puma*. He scream and strike, trying to get to Bane, who had jump' the fence. Bane, he say he fix him, and he grab long, steel crowbar with sharp point and jab it between the poles at the colt's head. He miss him head about an inch, and crowbar plow a furrow from head to shoulder. When it heal up, the hair was white."

Clayt listened to Juan's story while he watched the big bay trot back toward the mother he had just protected.

"Juan," he said, "does Bane pay you pretty regular?"

The Mexican shook his head. "Bane no have any money this year. Maybe nex' year he pay me."

"I was just thinking," Clayt explained. "You're of age now. Bane can't make you work for nothing, the way he always has. If you'll get him to give you a bill of sale for that mare and her colt, I'll give you a hundred and fifty dollars for them."

The Mexican's joyous response left no doubt as to his willingness to do this. "The señor will have the colt to-morrow," he answered. "Bane will be glad to sell him to me."

Thus it was that when the Silver Streak was three years old, Clayt spent all his spare time that fall in working with the horse that, through Juan, he had bought from Bane. Never in his life had Clayt worked so carefully to gentle a horse without breaking his spirit as he did with Silver, and while the colt fought at first, he soon yielded to the kind treatment of the expert horseman. Patiently, slowly, Clayt overcame the hatred for man which Bane's cruelty had created in the heart of the big bay, and as he learned to love Clayt, the keen intelligence of the animal enabled him to appreciate the difference between him and other men. The riders of the Two Bar Two he tolerated; Clayt he worshiped; and that he still remembered the man who had given him the terrible scar was shown when one day Clayt rode him past the J B Ranch.

Silver had been walking freely, with the marvelous, springy stride of which Clayt was so proud. Just as he passed the gate leading to the J B Ranch building, Bane came out of the stable and walked toward the house. Instantly, Silver stopped and stood shaking like a leaf. Clayt smoothed the glossy neck and spoke in a quiet voice.

"It's all right, pony, nuthin' is goin' to hurt you now."

The cowboy was astonished beyond belief when the horse that had become an affectionate pet screamed a challenge of rage across the dooryard at Bane, and crowded close to the fence.

"That pony sure don't forget nuthin'," Clayt told Dan Mason that night. "He remembers how he got that scar, and he's out to pay it back if he ever gets a chance. I sure wouldn't like to be in Jake Bane's boots if Silver ever sees him in the open country."

That winter, Queen and The Silver Streak were fed and warmly housed for the first time. They had a shed and plenty of hay. No longer did they have to paw through a foot of frozen snow to gnaw at the dried grass to be found beneath, and no animal could have responded more quickly and whole-heartedly to kindness and care than did the big, handsome bay who bore a tragic scar as a result of Bane's anger.

The comfort and content of these two animals was in marked contrast to the pitiful condition of Bane's stock.

The winter of 1929-30 settled down

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earlier than that of any year since 1888. The first snow fell in September. By Thanksgiving the range stock had drifted down from the foothills and were foraging along the frozen water-courses. The thermometer dropped to thirty degrees below zero and hung there for days at a time. Clayt and his men gathered every hoof of Two Bar Two stock into the ranch. Extra teams were put out, hauling hay to scatter on the feed grounds near natural shelter, or in the long sheds which protected the stock from the winter's wrath. The men were out before daylight, working among the cattle, bringing in any weak or injured calves to warm, log buildings about the home ranch. Across the dividing line between the Two Bar Two and the J B connected, Bane's starving cattle bawled continually. Juan Trujillo, sole rider for Bane, strove to care for the weaker ones, doling out hay from the meager amount which had not been sold, while Bane sat by the fire and cursed his luck and complained that no such winter had ever been known in the valley.

Clayt shut his eyes to the condition of Bane's stock, but he could not keep from hearing the bawling of the starving animals. New Year's night he rolled and tossed on a sleepless bed trying to shut out the pitiful sounds. At daylight he rose, and saddling Silver, he rode away to Del Norte to report the condition of the J B cattle to the sheriff.

Jim Clark listened to Clayt's report and flicked the ashes from his cigar.

"Sure, I'll go out and tend to 'em to-day," he said. "I'm sorry, though, it was you that had to report him. There's been bad blood between you. Bane's only waiting for some excuse to pick a scrap with you, and maybe this will give him the chance he's been looking for."

Clayt's face was expressionless. "I've thought of that," he admitted. "If it had been anybody else but him I'd 'a' reported him long ago, for the way he's treated Juan, but I'm not dodgin' him any more. If he wants trouble, I'm not runnin'."

"He needs killin' all right," Clark agreed, "but I'd hate to have it come through you. In the first place, Bane is fast and accurate with a gun. When he's mad, he's as crazy as a Arizona rattler in August. I could arrest him and put him in jail for cruelty to animals, but that would be only puttin' off the play until some other time."

Clayt nodded. "Don't do that," he answered.

The sheriff warned Bane that he must feed his stock at once, or the county would do it for him.

Bane sat by the fire smoking uninterestedly for some moments. "I ain't got no hay," he complained then.

"I know that," Clark snapped. "You've been selling the hay you should have kept to feed these cattle. You've got money, and I know it. Now, you'll buy hay, or the county will, and charge it up on your next year's taxes."

"But that will ruin me," whined the rancher. "Hay is twice as much as it was last fall." He got up and looked through the dingy window across the bleak, hoof-marked pasture toward the well-stocked sheds on the Two Bar Two. Suddenly he turned on the sheriff. "It's that danged meddlesome Clayt Lawton that's set you after me, ain't it?"

"Never mind who reported you," Clark replied. "You get busy buyin' hay for that stock."

A murderous gleam came into Bane's eyes. "All right," he agreed, "I'll see what I can do."

Clark got up and grabbed Bane by the arm. "Look here, you sneakin' brute," he threatened, "if anything happens to Clayt, I won't be goin' no place else to look for the man who done it!"

Before dark, teams were hauling hay

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from one of the other ranches to feed the starving cattle, and that night Clayt slept peacefully, conscious of having put a stop to their suffering, although he knew that his action had given Bane more reason than ever for hating him.

During the winter months Silver learned not only all the things that an expert cow horse is called upon to do, but many tricks besides, such as untying knots, opening the gate, and even muzzling the latch on the bunk-house door until it swung open. Clayt had never broken the spirit of Silver, and although they were the best of friends and the horse loved the cowboy, yet the colt did not hesitate to buck on a cold morning and to show by his actions that he still possessed the courage and spirit that had so strongly attracted Clayt to him.

As soon as the snow disappeared from the foothills Clayt rode back into the lower edges of the summer range. The hard winter had depleted the stacks, and he was threatened with a hay shortage that would force him to move to the summer range as early as possible. It was a perfect day of early spring, and both Clayt and Silver enjoyed the trip. The cowboy was pleased to find the trail open to his summer camp. He rode there, and finding that the supplies that had been left swinging from the roof beams were untouched, he loosened his cinch and turned Silver into the corral to munch a generous feed of oats before he built a fire and cooked food for himself.

Tossing his belt and gun onto one of the empty bunks, Clayt was preparing to enjoy a good meal when he heard the steady *clop, clop,* of a trotting horse. "I wonder who else is lookin' over the range," he thought, and lounged lazily toward the open door. Whoever it was had ridden down the slope behind the cabin, and Clayt, going around the end of the building, faced Jake Bane.

Bane saw at a glance that Clayt was unarmed, and instantly jerked his own gun.

"You interferin' skunk," he raged, "maybe I ain't got you where I want you now!"

Resistance on Clayt's part was utterly useless. He stood three feet from the corner of the cabin. Bane could easily kill him before he could reach its protection. Clayt coolly rolled a smoke and made no answer to the torrent of profane abuse which Bane poured forth. He knew that the rancher was working himself into the rage of a killer, but there was nothing to do but wait. Clayt knew that Bane might kill him any second. There was no use to try to talk the man out of the opportunity for which he had been hoping ever since the day Clayt had knocked him unconscious to prevent being branded in the face. There was one faint chance for delay. Pleading would have been useless—even if Clayt would have resorted to it to save his life. He blew a cloud of smoke high in the air and looked Bane squarely in the eye.

"It sorta looks like you had the best of it," he said, "but you forget my partner."

Bane sneered craftily. "There ain't anybody with you," he exulted. "I looked in the corral. There's only one horse in there."

Clayt nodded. "All the same, shootin' me up would be risky business for you, 'cause Jim Clark knows where to look in case anything happens to me."

Bane's eyes glittered like those of a madman.

"There's an easier way of gettin' rid of you than shootin' you," he gloated, "and one that will put me in the clear." Keeping Clayt covered, he slid to the ground. "Face toward that corral," he ordered.

For a moment Clayt's blood chilled as he realized what was in the mind of the man whom hatred had made almost

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a maniac. Bane intended to fasten Clayt's rope in such a manner as to make it appear that the cowboy had been caught in it accidentally. If he could do this and frighten Silver, there would be no hope for the cowboy, as no horse on earth can stand the terror of a helpless man dragging from the coils of a loop fastened to his side.

Bane prodded Clayt in the back with the muzzle of his gun.

"Keep your hands up high!" he ordered. "One crooked move, and I'll blow a hole through you that I could run a fence pole through."

Silver raised his head as he heard Bane's voice. He stopped eating and turned around, facing the gate. Clayt's hopes rose slightly. It was too much to expect that the horse would remember his old hatred for the man who had caused him so much suffering; but any horse knows when a man is angry, and Silver might refuse to let Bane catch him without roping, and this, of course, Bane could not do without first binding Clayt's hands. The cowboy had decided to resist any attempt to tie him up. If, for one instant, Bane should remove that gun from his back, Clayt would fight for his life, even though he was unarmed.

"Open that gate and go on in!" Bane ordered.

Clayt obeyed fearlessly. He had no thought of the horse's attacking him, unless he should entirely lose his head. Silver acted strangely. He trotted to the far side of the corral, snorted, and stood trembling. He had not appeared to be so frightened since the day Clayt had first roped him.

"Whoa, you red brute!" screeched Bane. "I'd like to kill you, too, if I didn't have something worse in store for you."

The horse put his head over the corral fence as if in his terror he would attempt to jump it. Clayt had not spoken to him, but when he saw him do that, his rising hopes fell. If Silver should break out of the corral, Bane would then throw caution away and pull the trigger on that cocked gun.

"Don't leave me, Silver!" Clayt called.

Instantly, the long, black-tipped ears flashed back. The sound of the well-loved voice quieted Silver's jumping nerves. He turned around and stood facing the two men, as if trying to work out the puzzle of conflicting odors —the familiar scent of his master and the awful one which he associated with terrific pain. He took a step toward the men, tossing his head, with nostrils extended, as if he could not understand. Suddenly his eyes turned green, flashing like those of an angry steer. Hatred swept all else from the mind of the horse, and he charged with bared teeth and flashing hoofs.

With an oath, Bane sprang back and fired at the oncoming horse. The bullet struck the steel horn of the saddle and whined away harmlessly over the buildings. Clayt sprang far to one side as the enraged animal rushed past him, screaming like a cat. Bane fired again, but missed, and was forced to jump to one side. Clayt ran to the corral and vaulted over it as Bane, following him, caught the top rail, only to be jerked down by Silver and sent staggering backward into the open space, trying to aim his gun toward a vital spot.

Of all the tragic fighters of history, there is no animal more terrifying than an angry horse, and Silver was certainly as angry now as he had been that other day when he had fought against this same man, only to receive the scar which had given him his name.

Clayt trembled for the safety of his pet when Bane dropped on one knee to aim at the broad breast of the charging horse. The cowboy's fear was as great as he would have felt for a friend fighting an unequal battle against an armed man. He saw the gun jump as

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Bane pressed the trigger, but a second later Silver's front hoofs crushed Bane's skull as though it had been cardboard. Clayt went around to the gate and opened it. Silver came to him at once, putting his head close to his master as if to shut out the horrible scene through which he had passed. Blood was streaming from a hole in his shoulder. Clayt washed out the wound and removed the bullet.

A man rode furiously across the park and slid to a stop.

"Hello, Clayt!" Jim Clark yelled. "What's happened?"

"Silver has just evened up an old score with Bane," he answered. "How'd you happen to come up here?"

"Juan came after me," explained the sheriff. "He saw you ride away this morning, and saw his boss follow you. He came for me right away. Bane had been threatening to kill you the first chance he got."

"He'd 'a' sure done it, too, if it hadn't been for this pony," said Clayt. "I'm much obliged to you, sheriff, for comin' so prompt. You can see that Silver did this in self-defense."

"No doubt about it," Clark agreed, "and it was a plumb good job at that! Bane didn't have no kin, so I guess Juan gets the ranch and cattle."

"He's entitled to it for what he stood from Bane," Clayt told him. "If I can help Juan in any way, let me know. If it hadn't been for him I wouldn't have owned The Silver Streak."

"And if Bane hadn't given the horse the silver streak——" began Clark.

"I wouldn't be here to talk about it," broke in Clayt. "Ain't it funny how I saved that colt from freezin' to death, and now he's evened things up?"

SNOWSLIDE BARES RICH ORE

A TETHERED mule, which even to-day is paraded in Spokane with silver trappings, uncovered the great Bunker Hill-Sullivan Mine in Idaho. A Swede miner walking down a trail swinging his pick, accidentally smacked a boulder of pure silver, and thus was the discoverer of the Tintic Standard of Utah. A bump of Jack Pickens' wagon wheel disclosed the Pinnacle of Gold on the Little Annie. It is in such strange ways that many mines have been found.

Recently a snowslide on Mammae Mountain has exposed what is believed to be a rich mine. This is near the famous Mary Murphy Mine, and the old mining camp of St. Elmo in Chaffe County is very much excited over the incident. It is reported that prospectors working along the creek bottom at the base of the mountain found a goodly amount of broken rock assaying one hundred and thirty-four dollars in gold, silver, and copper, which apparently came from the ledge above. Samples were sent to Denver and assays by local chemists gave high returns.

The Silver Queen Mining Co., of Denver, who are working this section, have thirty-eight men working on what is known as the Matilda property. As this is virgin soil it is being worked through three tunnels along the porphyry hanging wall, with ore breast-wide in two of the tunnel headings. The property is twenty-two miles west of Buena Vista, and its ore is shipped from Nathrop on the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad. Already plans for a new mill or the purchase of an old mill near St. Elmo are under way.

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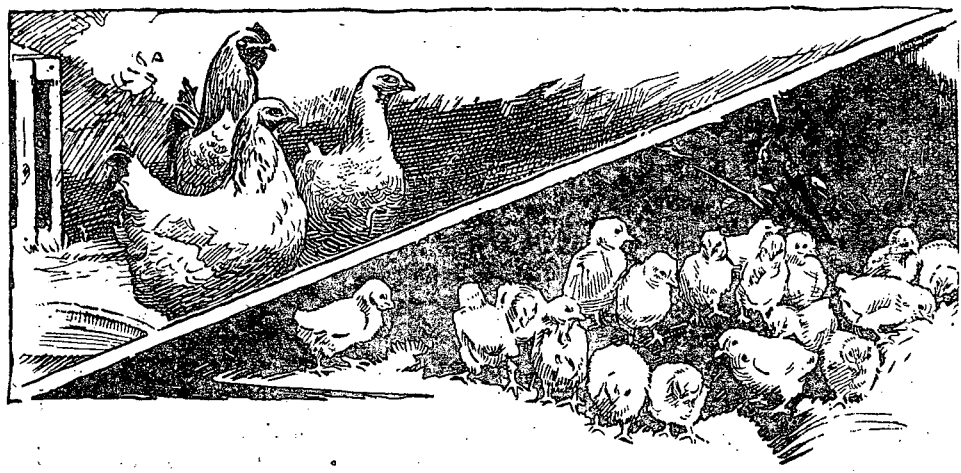

Pioneer Towns of the West

(Lebanon, Oregon)

By Duane Clark

LEBANON is situated at the foot of a low mountain, Ridgeway Butte, on the west bank of the Santiam River. Peterson's Butte and Saddle Mountain lie west and south of Lebanon. It is said that the view of Ridgeway Butte emerging from a mist on a rainy day is one well worth traveling far to see. Often the evergreen trees which grow on the top of this butte are overlaid lightly with snow which sparkles like diamonds in the sun.

The first pioneers settled in the section now known as Linn County in the late '40s. In those days, a church was the first consideration of a body of people as a means to hold them together. The founder of Lebanon was a Methodist, Jeremiah Ralston, and this sect built the first church there. The town was founded in 1847. In 1887, appeared the *Lebanon Express*, the town's first newspaper. While other newspapers have come and gone, the *Lebanon Express* still flourishes.

Lebanon is called "the strawberry city" because of the size and importance of its strawberry crop. The city, which is the second largest in Linn County, is three hundred and forty feet above sea level. The climate is mild and one of the best to be found in the United States. Eight months of almost perfect weather are followed by four months known as the rainy season, but even at this time there are only few days that do not see the sun.

The early settlers were a peace-loving community, and it is believed that these qualities which made them quiet and contented have been passed on to the present generation. For Lebanon has never been lawless.

The city water system, which is owned by the Mountain States Power Company, is remarkably free from impurities. Citizens of Lebanon and the farmers surrounding the town are served by the Lebanon Telephone Company. A branch line of the Southern Pacific Railroad goes through Lebanon, connecting with Albany and making connections with the main line at Woodburn.

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Lebanon is the gateway to the Cascades and the Santiam timber district which contains sixty billion feet of timber. Much of this is marketed through Lebanon. The Crown Willamette Paper Mill is Lebanon's largest industry. It is located at the north edge of the town and has a spur of the railroad going out to the plant. Wrapping paper is the only product of this mill. From thirty-five to fifty cords of white fir wood are used each twenty-four-hour day in the making of the paper. Approximately two cords of wood are required to manufacture one ton of the wrapping paper.

The Santiam Lumber Company manufactures box shook, using hemlock and spruce for this purpose. The plant, which is located in the west part of the town, has a daily capacity of fifteen thousand feet. The Super-Shingle Company manufactures shingles from red cedar, which is said to be the most lasting wood that shingles can be made from. The bolts from which the shingles are made are floated down the McDowell and Hamilton Creeks to the plant. Their capacity output is at all times readily disposed of.

A pioneer lumber firm is that of the Crandall Brothers, who have been in business in Lebanon for more than thirty years. Their manufactured products include everything in millwork line, special furniture and built-in features. Crandall Brothers also prepare specifications and blue prints for anything in the building line. The mill operates all the year round and fills orders from many of the surrounding towns.

The Seeck Differential Company has erected within the past few years a factory for the purpose of manufacturing the Seeck differential, which was invented and patented by Fred Seeck, a resident of Lebanon.

More than a third of the twenty-two thousand dairy cattle in Linn County are in territory tributary to Lebanon. The Lebanon Creamery manufactures from eighteen hundred to three thousand pounds of butter a day. Nearly a thousand families supply the creamery with cream. More than two hundred thousand dollars is paid yearly for butter fat. Distribution of the finished products is made throughout the surrounding territory.

Lebanon is a fruit-packing center. One of the most flourishing is prunes. Another active industry is that of packing strawberries and blackberries. The Lebanon greenhouse has a plant valued at over fifteen thousand dollars. Chiefly carnations and chrysanthemums are raised for wholesale trade at Seattle and Portland.

Poultry raising is another important and profitable industry in the vicinity of Lebanon. The Arnold Egg & Poultry Ranch is one of the oldest and largest breeding poultry plants in the State. It occupies sixty acres of land. Three thousand laying hens are kept, while an incubator has a capacity of twenty thousand eggs. Fifty thousand baby chicks are raised yearly, and sent to all parts of the Western States.

Lebanon has two bakeries, two banks, excellent hotels, and many up-to-date stores. There is a city library, and there are eight churches of as many denominations. There are two grade schools, and a high school where twenty-five teachers are employed. The high school is considered one of the finest in the United States. Its campus contains ten acres of land. Some of the shade trees that grow here are several hundred years old. The land was donated for educational purposes by Lebanon's founder and his neighbor. Students from several other communities attend the high school.

Among Lebanon's lodges and clubs are: Masons, Eastern Star, Woodmen of the World, Royal Neighbors, Neighbors of Woodcraft, and Knights of Pythias; the Commercial Club, Lions,

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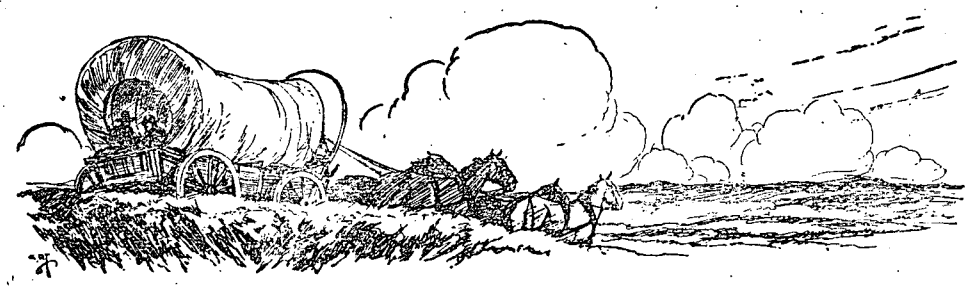
Women's Civic Club, the Study Club, and a few others. There is a Boy Scout organization and also one for Girl Scouts.

Northeast of the town is a park containing a fine swimming pool, which is open to all residents. The Civic Club maintains a caretaker here to look after the swimmers and avoid unnecessary accidents. South of the town is another park owned by the city which is arranged for the accommodation of traveling motorists as well as for the inhabitants of Lebanon. A few miles away one may find many interesting spots to visit, such as Waterloo Falls and Soda Springs.

South of the city is the Chester A. Lyon Big Brother Farm, where less fortunate city children are given country outings under the owner's care.

More than fifty years ago James Lindley began an industry in strawberries which to-day is a major crop. The wild strawberries have a delicious flavor. The first cultivated fruit grown were the Wilson and Colonel Cheney. James Lindley's son added to these varieties the Sharpless, Magoon, and the Brandywine. In the Lebanon section alone there are now approximately three hundred acres given over to strawberry patches. The average yield per acre is one and a half tons of marketable berries. Each year a fair is held and prizes are distributed.



LOST CITIES ARE FOUND

THERE are few occupations, no matter how prosaic they appear to be to the outsider, which do not contain some "silver lining" of romance or picturesqueness. The workday routine of a Federal land inspector in the West was recently totally upset by stumbling upon ruins which he concluded are those believed by the Indians to be one of the storied "Seven Cities of Cibola." The legend has it that these cities, which were searched for by many explorers, including Coronado—but always in vain—were built of gold. A Spanish priest even told of watching the Indians dine off plates of solid gold as he was camped on a cliff near by.

This favored modern inspector, W. J. Hanna, came accidentally upon the ruins while wandering through a desert near the Mohawk Mountains, some fifty miles south of Palomas. The ruins, which are nearly leveled, extend for an area of about six square miles and are covered by shifting sand dunes. However, traces of masonry and hard roadways appear. A prehistoric watercourse is evident, and the remains of an elaborate system of irrigation are also perceptible.

Such a "find" cannot be allowed to go uninvestigated, and Mr. Hanna plans to return at no very distant date and make exhaustive excavations. The true explorer needs little excuse for an expedition, and a city of gold has power to enthrall the fancies of even the veriest layman. The results of this exploration will be awaited with lively interest.

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Due Warning

By Seth Ranger

Author of "Fiddle or .45," etc.

AS she prepared the noon meal, Mrs. Caldwell sang; but the song was forced, and the smile on her face, flushed from bending over the kitchen range, was intended to conceal her worried state of mind. She lifted the cover from the kettle of stew frequently. From this position she could study the features of her son, Bob, without his being aware of her scrutiny.

Bob Caldwell was sprawled in a chair; his long legs stretched out in front of him; his hands folded in his lap, and his dark eyes glancing from the south pasture dotted with cows to the shotgun standing behind the half-closed door. His mother noticed that each time his eyes returned to the shotgun they remained longer and his face grew darker. She could see the muscles about his jaw tightening with determination as he reached some decision. His manner as he stood up was that of a man gripped by cold, deliberate rage rather than hot temper. He did not glance toward his mother, but caught up the shotgun, slipped a shell into each barrel, and started for the door.

"Bob!" With a quick movement, Mrs. Caldwell had entered the room. "What are you going to do? There's nothing you can shoot with a shotgun at this season of the year. The season on upland birds and water fowl is closed."

"I know it," he said grimly; "but there's something I can take a shot at—Scollard."

"Bob! That'll be murder!" his mother cried in horror. "Oh, Bob, I know we are desperate, but that won't better our condition any."

"It won't be murder," the youth answered, "because I won't kill him. I

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figure to fill his tough old hide with rock salt. I think he's yellow, and if he gets the idea I'm a tough, dangerous person, he'll think twice before he rides roughshod over us. Once before when I threatened him, he said there was a law in the land. I told him I knew it and I was always willing to pay the penalty for anything I did, but that the law wouldn't help him much, because by the time the law swung into the game I'd be all through with him."

She ignored the grim humor in his words, knowing he did not intend to be humorous. He was too desperate for that. In many respects, Bob Caldwell had the viewpoint of a grown man. Since fourteen he had carried a man's burden. He had not only taken care of his mother, but was sending his younger brothers and sisters to school. He had the man's viewpoint on family responsibility, but aside from that his mind was that of any youth of eighteen.

"Now, Bob," the mother said with spirit, "you know I've seldom ordered you to do anything. We have worked together as partners, and slowly but surely solved the problems as they have appeared. Some way we will solve this one. I order you to put that—— No! Bob, I ask you to put that gun away."

For a moment he stood defiant, then with a shrug of his shoulders he unloaded the weapon and placed it in the corner.

"Scollard was glad enough to unload this broken-down ranch onto us," Bob bitterly observed. "We could have it at our own terms and make the final payments whenever we liked. Relying on that, we plunged into debt, besides putting everything we had saved into good dairy stock. Now he comes along and says we must pay up or get out. His verbal promises didn't mean a thing. He claims he never said we could have ten years, or longer, to pay. I know what's back of it all—he wants that swamp land for a duck club for himself and his swell friends, and he wants this house we've fixed up for a clubhouse. Well, let's see him try and get it?"

Bob Caldwell knew he was singing to himself in the dark to keep up his courage. He knew that, legally, Scollard could step in and take possession whenever he desired.

A life on the frontier from infancy had equipped Bob for ranch life. He knew how to take advantage of every situation. And when he learned that the old ranch Scollard had unloaded on them had once been a great duck-hunting district, he set about building up the depleted flocks. In the old days pothunters and tinhorn sportsmen from the city had practically wiped out the ducks. By degrees, Bob Caldwell saw the mallards and teal increase in numbers until he felt justified in leasing the swamp land to a duck club for the coming winter. Protected by game laws which limited the number of ducks that could be killed in a given week, the flocks could now stand hunting without danger of depletion.

But all this had taken considerable time and labor. Bob had built ponds, trapped animals that preyed on ducks and their eggs, and otherwise made the place attractive. During the occasional cold spells when the feeding grounds were frozen, he had bought wheat and fed them. Nearly a thousand ducks were living there the year around. Others came down from the North in the fall.

The entire area was kept supplied with fresh water by Clear Creek, which burst from the mountains less than a mile away. In fact, the delta on which the Caldwell Ranch was located had been built by the waters of Clear Creek, with some aid from the Cultus Chuck River three miles away. Diking had made the land safe from high tides on Puget Sound.

"It all happened because I did Scollard a good turn," Bob continued. "You

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remember when the cutthroat trout were taking the fly in Clear Creek? Well, I sent word to Scollard to come over and bring his friends who liked to fish. They came, and they got the limit, and then some. Oh, I saw 'em hide at least a hundred extra trout so the game warden wouldn't see 'em.

"Scollard was crazy about the trout, but when he saw the ducks go up in clouds he decided he wanted the ranch back again. There are ten men in Seattle who would be tickled to death to dig up five hundred dollars apiece for shooting ducks the coming season. Five thousand dollars would put us well in the clear. It would give us a breathing spell, and Scollard knows it. It would put us beyond his reach forever. Besides that, we'd make a little money serving meals week-ends and putting the hunters up for the night.

"I'm not going to have Scollard or anybody else come in here and take what we've battled hard to build up. I'm going to declare war. And what's more, I'm going to block the power company from taking water from Clear Creek. You heard they were to be given the right to divert the water from Clear Creek to Cultus Chuck, provided they could come to an agreement with the property owners down here. And we're the property owners. And I'm going to begin by keeping Scollard and his friends off this place." Again, Bob Caldwell reached for the shotgun. Again his mother stopped him.

"Bob," she said quietly, "I know how you feel, and if I were your age I'd probably want to act as you do. But as we grow older we find out that our chances of gaining a point are often better if we use strategy. Scollard is using strategy to get this ranch for a duck club for himself and his friends."

"And you can bet the friends will pay the freight, and pay plenty," the youth interrupted. "And he'll be leasing the grazing land to dairymen. We've brought it from an abandoned dump to producing profit, and he steps in."

"I know! I know," the mother said, wearily trying to make her point. "Scollard is using strategy. He's not saying to you, 'Bob, this ranch will make a fine duck club. Legally I can take it and I'm going to do so.' No, in a roundabout way, he says, 'Bob, money is tight. I've got to have my money. For that reason I'll have to sell the ranch in order to get my mortgage money out of it!' That, Bob, is the only legal manner in which he can gain his object."

"And an underhanded way to do business," the boy blurted.

"I agree with you, Bob. I prefer the old way we are used to—reliance on the spirit and letter of a man's word. But when we are on the enemy's ground, we must fight his sort of battle."

"Poor people against wealth," Bob complained.

"True," she admitted, "but think of it in this manner. "His is a knowledge of finance. Yours is a knowledge of the physical conditions of the country. It is possible you can match your knowledge against his and win. And if you lose, then you have profited by the experience. Think it over, Bob, then decide. You have overcome many problems on the ranch so far."

"With your help," he said quickly.

"And am I not helping you now, Bob?" his mother inquired softly, quick to take advantage of the situation.

"Darned if you're not," he replied.

"Come, then, let's eat." She filled six plates with a stew that would have remained an epicure of home and mother, then called Bob's brothers and sisters.

Bob Caldwell ate thoughtfully, even mechanically.

"I'm just wondering," he said at last, "just wondering if there isn't some way out of this. Mother, I'm going to take a walk. I know this country pretty well——"

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"Every inch, Bob," she said.

"Yes, but just the same I want to take another look," he insisted. "Back in my head I've got a plan that may give us a break with Scollard."

Scollard, in an expensive outing costume and accompanied by several friends, had spent the better part of an hour on the outskirts of the Caldwell Ranch. It was his appearance that had so aroused Bud and nearly caused the youth to pepper him with rock salt. Possibly Scollard sensed this, for he had said to his friends:

"The Caldwell boy is rather hot-tempered and won't like the idea of my taking this ranch for a hunting-and-fishing club. Jim," he added, turning to one of the group, "you'll remember the fish we caught and you'll remember the ducks we——"

A dog, running ahead, alarmed a flock of ducks. They soared away with a roar of wings. This startled others. Flock after flock took to the air, until the sky appeared to be filled with V formations swinging over the swamps.

"As I was going to say, Jim," Scollard continued, "I expect you to back my statements. I don't want the rest of you boys to think me overenthusiastic when I say that this can be made—is now, in fact—the finest hunting and fishing preserve in the State. But the ducks have answered my question for me."

"And what is your proposition, old man?" another inquired.

Scollard knew when to strike an iron. This iron was hot. "Limit the membership to seven, including myself. Each member is to pay a thousand dollars. That's not steep. That is, not steep for men of our means. There are clubs in the country that charge much more—very much more. Here you will get the ducks and the trout. At the cheaper places there's a doubt."

"Fair enough," said the other, after a moment's reflection. "But I don't like the idea of that Caldwell kid hanging around here. He looks as if he'd know how to use a rifle. If his heart's in this thing he might——"

"The Caldwells will be moved out bag and baggage." Scollard winked. "Money is tight, gentlemen, at present, and it is necessary for me to foreclose. Ask any court if that isn't reason enough. As for the ducks and trout, Caldwell may have increased their numbers through his efforts; but the fact remains that trout and ducks belong to the State—not to the individual. Are you with me?"

"With the understanding that the Caldwell menace is removed we are," they answered.

"And now," Scollard announced dramatically, "for the final important word—something that Caldwell and everybody else, except myself, has failed to consider. The power dam they are building on the Cultus Chuck will create a vast lake. This will serve as a place of rest, to ducks flying south. It will be visible for miles, fresh water that they love. Naturally, this ranch will attract many. I feel certain we can have unlimited shooting. And, if we get a few over the limit, it will be an easy matter for one of you to run over in a yacht and pick them up. That would be one for the game warden to laugh off."

Scollard did not add that the presence of his friends lent him courage to face Bob Caldwell on his own ground. He excused himself for a moment and hurried over to the youth, who sat on a ridge, blinking at the scene below him—a landscape of green, dotted with cattle; green broken with ponds of water, dotted with ducks; and the green clumps of timber. Behind lay a mighty range of timbered mountains and roaring rivers. The ruggedness of the scene appeared to blend perfectly with the ruggedness of the youth. In a word, Bob Caldwell was a mountain man who had

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stepped from the picture. He looked up and called: "Hello, Mr. Scollard."

"Hello, Bob," Scollard answered. "As perhaps you know, money is tight, Bob. I've got to ask you to pay off or I'll have to foreclose."

"Are you sure the ducks haven't something to do with your sudden need of money? You told us——"

"Never mind what you think I told you," Scollard interrupted sharply; "it's the written agreement that counts. The note you signed two years ago read: 'On demand I promise to pay——' And I am demanding."

"The place is in pretty good shape," the youth said; "I guess I can put on a new mortgage and raise the money. I'll drop over to the bank to-morrow."

"That will be quite satisfactory," Scollard answered.

Accompanied by his mother, Bob Caldwell called at the nearest bank the following morning. This bank specialized in small ranch loans. The president listened attentively.

"Yes, it is a fact," he said then, "that you've made a lot out of the old ranch and proved yourselves to be people of the most substantial type; but, er, ah—er—the fact is—money is tight."

The president was not prepared for Bob's quick retort.

"That sounds like a quotation from Scollard. He didn't happen——"

"Of course not," the other answered; but his red face proved that boy had tripped him up.

"You don't need to admit anything," Bob added. "I know Scollard gave you his instructions. I've given him a chance to be decent. I'm going to give him one more chance, then I'm going to go after him roughshod."

"Er—ah—no violence, young man," the banker warned.

"No violence," Bob promised, "something that's going to hurt even more."

On his way home, Bob Caldwell turned down an infrequently used road. The remains of a split cedar fence ran unevenly along both sides. The fence was almost covered with a tangle of sword ferns and blackberry vines. The road ended in a ranch that was known locally as the Hough place. Several attempts had been made to operate a dairy ranch on the land, but without success. During the winter and spring the grass was green, but in the summer it quickly dried up through lack of water. An old creek bed ran across the property, but in bygone days a slide in the mountains had changed the creek's course and the water emptied into the Cultus Chuck. The creek was known as Dry Creek.

The house was in fair shape, except that it needed a new roof. The rooms were musty and damp; the doors and windows stuck; the kitchen range was rusty, and the well needed cleaning out.

"Bob," Mrs. Caldwell said suddenly, "why did you bring me down here?"

"I'm looking for a place to light—if we have to. Scollard thinks he has us on the run—and I'm afraid he has. He can take the ranch, but he can't take the stock and equipment—that is ours. We've got to have some place to go to when we're ordered off. This is the nearest."

"Oh, Bob!" she exclaimed. "After we've worked so hard!"

"It's tough," he admitted, "but you yourself told me I couldn't get anywhere with violence, and I've come around to your viewpoint."

The barns were in fair shape, thanks to a good painting several years before. If the ranch had water, in time it could be made into something. But it would take water, time, and money. Of the three necessary elements, the Caldwells possessed only time, and not very much of that. Mrs. Caldwell felt sick at the thought of it—the constant fight to make a profitable ranch out of neglected ground!

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Bob drove his mother home, then saddled a horse and rode up the Cultus Chuck River. During his spare time he had worked on the big dam the power company was throwing across the canyon. From a high ridge he could see both the dam and the winding courses of the three streams to the sound—the turbulent Cultus Chuck, which meant bad water; the old bed that was Dry Creek, and the sparkling stream, Clear Creek.

Bob continued on up the ridge, passed the dam, and came to another stop. He had a hunch he was being followed. He rode on at a leisurely pace and again stopped. There was no doubt of it, some one was following him. A few minutes later, Brady, president of the power company, galloped into view.

"Oh, it's you, Caldwell," he said. "We've had a number of fights on our hands to get the needed water, land, and pole-line rights of way, and we're suspicious of everybody who comes up here." He smiled pleasantly.

A hard fighter; a man who could drive a hard bargain, but square. That was Brady's reputation, and it was deserved.

"Caldwell," he continued, "I know you're a kid, but you've always seemed like a man to me. I know you have considerable influence with your mother, and properly so. You've proved yourself. I don't pass compliments around, young fellow, and that's a long speech for me to make, but I had to lay the foundation for what is coming later. Briefly, this:" Again he smiled. "There's lots to this power game that's not on the surface."

"That's true of the financial game as taught by Scollard," Bob observed; "and it's true of the stock game and the duck game, too."

Brady gave him a curious glance. "Hardship and adversity, Caldwell, are good teachers. You've been well taught. But to proceed. I don't propose to trick you, young man; I'd sooner arrive at a bargain on its merits. The Cultus Chuck, as you know, has its source in the glaciers. Often in winter the water is low. But in the summer, when the glaciers are melting, it is high. Clear Creek carries a large volume of water in winter because it wanders through the foothills and cares for the rain water. We need Clear Creek. It will be an easy matter to throw an earth dam across it, then tunnel through this ridge, and empty the stream into Cultus Chuck."

"That's true," Bob agreed.

"We can get Clear Creek by going into the courts, but it is an easier matter for the two of us to agree on something. What is fair, Caldwell?"

"I came up here, Mr. Brady, to size things up and because I was told you were up here," Bob admitted. "There's a mortgage on our place, held by Scollard. If you'll take care of Scollard, we'll release all rights to Clear Creek, provided you'll agree to blow out that slide on Dry Creek and let the normal flow of Dry Creek go down its old course."

Brady did not pause to consider. So thoroughly was he acquainted with the physical characteristics of the entire project that he could accept or reject any proposition instantly.

"Done, Caldwell!" he said. "I assume such a deal is satisfactory or you wouldn't have suggested it. We gain a stream, but we don't lose an inch of water because Dry Creek empties into the Cultus Chuck below the dam anyway. But for the life of me I don't see your game."

Bob sighed heavily, indicating the burden he was carrying at the moment. "Mr. Brady, I'm matching wits with Scollard—that's the game."

"Caldwell," the other answered, "you've tackled a man-sized job. More power to you! You're going to need it. Let's move fast and see what happens."

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They returned to the power site at a gallop. Brady seated himself at a typewriter and hastily wrote out the necessary papers, then at a gallop they continued on to the Caldwell Ranch. Mrs. Caldwell was hurried over to a notary public. Here she signed the papers, which were properly witnessed.

"Bob," she cried, "what are you doing? I didn't have time to ask you what it was all about, but——"

"Mother, I'm trying to do the Caldwell family some good, and I think I have, but I'm not crowing yet. Right now I'm too scared to crow, and if I win out I'll be too thankful to crow. I've got to go to town with Mr. Brady. I'll be back to-morrow."

Bob Caldwell returned the following afternoon to find his young brother contemplating assault and battery on a deputy sheriff. His sisters were scowling at the deputy, and his mother had been crying.

"Oh, Bob," she sobbed, "I've hoped against hope, but it's happened! Scollard has foreclosed. We have sixty days in which to get off the place. The officer, here, is waiting to serve an order to keep the peace on you."

"You don't need to worry about me, officer," the youth informed the deputy. "My plans for fighting Scollard don't include assault, battery, or the burning of gunpowder."

Convinced that Bob spoke the truth, the officer left his order and headed for home.

"And now what, Bob?" Mrs. Caldwell inquired. "People won't bid against Scollard for this place. He will get it at his own price. When I think of the drudgery that's gone into this land to make it profitable it makes me absolutely sick!"

"It doesn't make me feel any too well," Bob admitted, "but there's a silver lining to the present cloud. To-morrow I'm going to see Scollard. At the same time I'll make arrangements to rent the old Hough place."

Mrs. Caldwell shuddered. The lowlands were sour swamp and the high ground was dry, but she said nothing more. Bob was doing his best, and that was all she asked in any one. Having voiced her complaint, she would never object again. This was the spirit of the pioneers, and there was plenty of pioneer blood in her veins. She had passed it along to Bob, too. She could see that in his resourcefulness. From childhood he had made the best of every situation and overcome obstacles with whatever he happened to have available. That was a more valuable heritage than gold.

Bob did complain that he was wasting a lot of time running back and forth between the ranch and Seattle, but there was no way around it. Scollard received him with some apprehension.

"Well, Caldwell?" he asked.

"Any chance of renewing that mortgage or being given an extension of time?" inquired Bob. "Six months' extension would be enough, Mr. Scollard."

"We've been over that before," Scollard answered; "my answer is the same —no."

"I know we've been over it," Bob admitted, "but I wanted to be sure you hadn't changed your mind. You've given us two months to get off in. What are we going to do? A forced sale of our stock won't bring much."

"It is none of my business what you do," Scollard growled. "I wish you'd not bother me. I'm busy."

Bob's eyes narrowed. "I can lease the shooting rights for five thousand dollars," he ventured. "I can find men willing to pay that much in advance, I think, if you'll give me a week's time. We could raise the rest on the stock. What do you say?"

"It is too late to do that," Scollard said crisply.

"Hmmmmm," Bob softly retorted, "I

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knew you'd say that. I just wanted to be fair with you, to give you one last chance to do the right thing. I've known from the first you wouldn't. Now, I'll make you a proposition. You buy the old Hough place and turn it over to me with a clear title. In turn, we'll give up all rights to our place. Further, we'll pay you a rental for the pasture lands. You can get the Hough place cheap enough."

"I'm not interested in your problems, Caldwell," Scollard observed in a nasty tone. He pressed a buzzer and a secretary entered. "Show Mr. Caldwell out," he directed.

"Now listen to me, you buzzard," Bob rasped, showing signs of losing his temper. "I've been on the asking side long enough. I've asked you for fair treatment until I'm sick of it. Now I'm going to tell you what you're going to do. Most men who hunt and fish are real sportsmen. Occasionally there are exceptions, like you. Usually they're game hogs, pothunters, and so forth. Either you're going to get that Hough place for me in return for our getting off the land we've developed into a fine farm, or I'm going to go to five or six real sportsmen in this man's town, turn the case over to them, and let them go to it. They've got the money to fight you. We haven't. You're taking advantage of that. When the smoke of battle has blown away, the Caldwell family will be right where they are for another year, and a half dozen sportsmen in Seattle will get free shooting on one of the finest spots in the Puget Sound country. You've got five minutes to accept. No, that's too long. You've got one minute."

Amazed at his own display of force, Bob settled back in his chair and awaited the verdict.

Scollard was purple with fury. He half signaled his secretary to throw Bob from the office. Then he motioned the secretary to retire, much to that individual's relief. Scollard hated to be dictated to by anybody, much less a youth whom he considered a mere rancher. And yet he knew there were men in town who would gleefully take advantage of Bob's offer; men he himself had antagonized; men who would be touched by the youth's story and would lend help without thought of personal reward. And there were men who would do almost anything if in return they could enjoy an occasional outing during the winter months.

Presently Scollard spoke. "Arrange to move to the Hough place at once," he said. "I have decided to accept your proposition. And now—get out!"

Bob left Scollard's office whistling cheerfully. Scollard was puzzled.

"The chump!" he muttered scornfully. "Whistling! He's giving up a good ranch, developed to the highest state of efficiency; giving up a duck club site worth five thousand dollars, and taking a financial licking besides, for a clear title to a worthless ranch that I can pick up for five or six thousand dollars. In all my experience I can't see what there is in that deal to make him feel cheerful. As a matter of fact, he hasn't awakened to the situation yet."

Mrs. Caldwell felt the same way about it when Bob informed her what he had done.

"Bob," she said, "you've thrown away a lot of money to-day. But, after all, it is money you made."

"Money we made," he corrected her. "Suppose we hadn't made him accept my plan? The ranch would have been sold for the amount of the mortgage, and we'd have had nothing."

"Your shooting rights were worth five thousand dollars," she insisted.

"Ducks and trout are the property of the State, mother, and the ranch owner has no interest in them," Bob answered.

"But a ranch where ducks and trout are found is worth more money even if the State does own them," she said.

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"Why didn't you go ahead, get backing in return for the shooting privileges, and beat him? Oh, Bob," she sobbed, in spite of her intention not to complain, "it isn't so much the loss as it is the humiliating fact that a man like Scollard has beaten us!"

"Time will tell whether he has or not," Bob said thoughtfully. "In the meantime, I'm not going around hanging my head."

Scollard came around three days later with an attorney and the necessary papers.

"And now," Bob remarked, when the matter had been settled up and everything signed, "don't say that I didn't give you every chance in the world to do the right thing. When you refused, I had to match my knowledge of this country against your knowledge of sharp business tricks. That's all."

"Just what does he mean by that?" Scollard asked the lawyer as they drove away.

"Nothing, my dear Scollard, nothing," the latter assured him. "I've examined everything very carefully. There is no loophole by which he could again get repossession of that ranch. None! The youth has pride. His remarks were intended more to salve that pride than to hurt you."

Months passed swiftly for Scollard. Several times during the season he hurried over to his ranch for a fishing trip, but the duck hunting was what appealed to him most. A man could sit in comfort in a blind and wait for the ducks to come to him. He had seen numerous ducks nesting; had later seen the young swimming about the swamps where Bob had created ponds, and still later had seen them flying—local ducks that give the sportsmen shooting until the Northern ducks come south. And the Northern ducks were already on their way south. The lake created by the big power dam was serving as a resting basin. Here they would linger a day or so, then continue on to Oregon and California. Some would remain now and more would do so later.

The opening of the season found Scollard and those he had sold thousand-dollar memberships to on his cruiser. The vessel purposely swung in toward the old Hough place.

"Some people," Scollard observed, "were born to labor for the rest of us. Take the Caldwells, for example, mother and son. They've changed that dry farm into something resembling a dairy ranch. But it has cost them greatly in strength. I saw Mrs. Caldwell last week, tired, bronzed from exposure——"

The cruiser passed on. The Caldwells lifted their eyes a moment and straightened themselves.

"Scollard," Bob said briefly.

"Yes," the mother answered, "Scollard. I could almost hate him; but, Bob, I have never hated—it takes too much from one's self." The muscles tightened about her lips as she struggled to control her emotion. She could never forget the possibilities the old place had offered—well-watered ground; an income from a duck club; ample pasture the year around, thanks to Clear Creek.

Bob's face softened. "In another month, mother," he said, "you can pack your bags and start for California for a visit with your sister and a rest."

"A rest?" Relief filled her face for a moment, then she shook her head. "No, Bob, there's no rest for me this year. Besides, where's the money coming from?"

"It's coming," he said, with so much conviction in his tone that she glanced curiously at him.

Scollard, still watching them, saw mother and son again bend to their tasks—tillers of the soil whose bent backs sustained such as he. "Free slaves," he muttered.

The cruiser dropped anchor and the

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clubmen went ashore in the tender. Scollard was all smiles as he hurried up to the gamekeeper's cottage. The latter, an expert in his line, shook his head sadly.

"No ducks," he announced.

"No ducks?" exclaimed Scollard.

"No ducks!" exclaimed the others.

"No ducks," the gamekeeper repeated. "They started falling off ten days ago when the power company turned Clear Creek into the Cultus Chuck River. As the ponds dried up, the ducks pulled out. I don't know where they've gone to. There are a few mornings and evenings, but as soon as you start shooting they'll clear out. There's nothing here to attract them."

The party entered the blinds early the following morning. By nine o'clock they had brought down seventeen ducks, The air was deserted from nine o'clock on. Suddenly in the distance they heard, *Crump! Crump! Crump!* A few minutes later the sound was repeated. Fifteen minutes later it was repeated again.

"That's down on the old Hough place," Scollard said suddenly. "Bob Caldwell must be shooting, but I can't understand why a duck—— There it goes again!"

Scollard hurried up to the gamekeeper. "What must we do to get the ducks back here?" he inquired.

"Get the power company to give up Clear Creek," the man answered. "Nothing else will attract them. They have plenty of salt water everywhere. What they wanted was fresh water, and as long as this farm was flooded with fresh water they stayed. You couldn't drive 'em away."

Scollard turned to his attorney. "Could they be forced to——" he began.

"The needs of the public," the lawyer interrupted, "are of greater importance than the needs of the individual. You might collect damages, but the measure of the damages, I am afraid, would include actual damage to this farm. I doubt if the court would include loss of the wild ducks and trout. It is pretty well settled that such things are the property of the State."

Scollard shrugged his shoulders. "I'm going to drive over and see what Bob Caldwell is shooting at, any way. I can't believe——" He did not finish his sentence, but hurried over to the old Hough place, followed by his companions.

There was a new bridge over Dry Creek. Water was rushing down the old watercourse, carrying the débris of many years on its surface. A series of canals was flooding the old swamp lands. Flocks of ducks were winging their way overhead, circling, setting their wings, dropping, then darting into the air again after the manner of ducks studying unfamiliar ground.

Bob Caldwell was talking to Brady and a half dozen others. "What do you think?" The youth's anxious eyes searched the man's face.

"Why, Bob, I think you're going to have one of the best duck clubs in the Sound country." He looked at the youth, under weight and drawn from the endless labor of rebuilding the abandoned ranch. He looked at Mrs. Caldwell, on the verge of exhaustion. "And you deserve it, kid," Brady added.

"Then you'll lease the shooting rights for the season?" Bob asked.

"You bet we will—seven of us at a thousand dollars each. But we won't start in for a month. We'll wait until the ducks get used to this ground; wait until the Northern ducks come down, too. And even then we won't work it to death, Bob. All we want is an occasional outing."

Scollard pushed his way through the crowd. "See here, Caldwell," he rasped, "you put one over on me! You took advantage of your knowledge of ducks and——"

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"As you took advantage of your knowledge of the law and business," Bob cut in. "We worked like the deuce to bring that ranch up to its present state. We'd have been willing to remain there even if the ducks did clear out. But you couldn't see it that way. You wanted everything for as little as possible. And remember this: I gave you due warning; gave you every chance in the world to shoot square. I knew what was coming. The power company had to have that water, and nothing could stop them; the damages would be just what the farm was worth, for as you pointed out, the ducks I raised there were the property of the State. And so, seeing what was coming; we hunted for a place to go. We used our knowledge, as you used yours. We made sure waste water would be diverted down Dry Creek; then we traded our interest in the ranch you took from us for this place. We made it attractive for the ducks, which are the property of the State, and there they are."

"And," chuckled Brady, as his friends smiled, "he shifted any fighting about it from his shoulders to yours, Scollard. Well, we're ready whenever you wish to start. In the meantime, boys, we'd better write out our checks to Bob. He's going to need that money for stock feed until his irrigation system gets to working. And, besides, Mrs. Caldwell is going to California for a rest."

Scollard and his friends moved slowly back to the ranch. "Isn't there some way we can recover on the grounds of fraud?" he began.

"I'm afraid," his lawyer answered, "even a court of equity would hold that you had due warning."

Overhead sounded the thrilling whistle of passing wings. The mallards and teal were coming in.

A PIONEER RECALLED

ONE of the founders of St. Louis, August Chouteau, was recalled to mind recently when some old buildings in a street in that city were razed. Despite the hardships that they suffered, many of the pioneers lived to a great age, and Chouteau, who was born in New Orleans in 1739, died in St. Louis in February, 1829, having attained the age of ninety. In a St. Louis street, on a corner in the downtown district, some buildings were recently torn down. Their demolition brought to light the history of the block on which they were located. The block was owned by August Chouteau, who sold it in 1828 for fifteen hundred dollars. The value of the property to-day is placed by real-estate experts at five hundred thousand dollars. As was so often the case with the pioneers, gold lay under the very feet of Chouteau, though no mining expert could have foretold what a rich vein that particular piece of earth would disclose.

But the Chouteaus, August and his brother, Pierre, were interested in the fur trade rather than in gold, and in August, 1763, the brothers joined the expedition of Laclede to establish the fur trade in the region watered by the Mississippi and its tributaries. That August was successful in his career may be imagined from the fact that in February, 1764, he was placed in command of the party which began the establishment of a trading post called St. Louis on the site of the present city.

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The Humanness of the Indian

(Religion, Burial Customs, Etc.)

By Kathleen Ludwick

BURIAL customs differed in various tribes. Many of the Western Indians practiced cremation. They had no implements for digging deep graves. This custom, which was regarded with such great abhorrence by most white people on the frontier, is now followed by great numbers of whites who find it more sanitary and preferable for many reasons to the old custom of interring the body to molder underground. The southern Indians had more advantageous conditions for mummification and the preservation of their dead. Also—inevitable economic cause which is usually found to be the basis of most customs of all races!—fuel was scarce, a valuable commodity.

The mourners cut their hair and daubed their faces with pitch and ashes, a custom curiously akin to those of certain sections of the Orient. No doubt, many of them had entered into new marital relations by the time the pitch had worn off, but the need of an Indian widow for a protector and provider of food was greater than that of most of her white sisters to-day.

In some isolated place, preferably in the heart of the forest, they heaped the wood for the funeral pyre and saw the bodies of their loved ones reduced to ashes. They heaped boulders over the mounds of ashes, in which they had placed the weapons of the chase of the warrior or the favorite basket and needles and beads of the housewife. I am confident that in their hearts they mourned their dead as long and sincerely as white people do.

Instead of regarding the burning of their dwellings after the death of the inmates as a baseless superstition, we might well attribute it to the enduring relics of great scientific knowledge at-

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tributed by some students to vanished races who were possibly the progenitors of these people. More and more is mankind coming to appreciate the great purificatory offices of fire.

Old Mrs. Moody was a Klamath who had married an Englishman of considerable education. She was the owner of a hundred and sixty acres of rich land on the Klamath Reservation, one of the richest in the country. After her husband's death she preferred the excitement and comforts of town life to the monotonous existence on the reservation. She told me many legends and stories of the old days before the coming of the whites. In appreciation of some little presents and favors, one Christmas she brought me for a present a beautiful basket woven by her own gnarled, toil-worn hands. No kind of work is harder on the fingers than basketry. In the old days, she said, the Indian women rolled the withes against the bare skin of their thighs, no other method being so satisfactory. She said that many times the skin of her thigh would be worn raw, almost bleeding, from this practice.

On this occasion I invited her to have dinner with us. She was neater about her person than most white women would be under the same circumstances; and every night she put up her graying hair in crimpers!

We seated ourselves at the table. I was about to pass something to the little old lady, when I noticed a look of surprise on her face.

"Don't you ever say your prayers?" she asked reprovingly.

It developed that her husband had always asked the blessing, and after his death she had followed the same custom. I apologized and asked her to say grace. It was the most affecting grace I ever heard.

"O God," she prayed, "please be good to these good people; send them plenty eat always; plenty clothes; plenty warm blankets; plenty friends; plenty crops" —et cetera.

"You know, my people were superstitious," she said once, telling me how they shared the belief of some more civilized peoples in the existence of the "water babies," the spirits of little drowned children who lived on the bottom of the lakes and streams and were always trying to persuade other living children to go and join them!

Once, an old medicine woman had chosen her for a successor. She took the little girl with her on one occasion to talk with the spirits all night. She drove her dug-out into the tules at the edge of the great marsh and there "made medicine" consisting of various and sundry incantations. Finally, she started to break some wokus bread into bits and scatter it into the water to feed the dead.

The little neophyte had had no supper and was hungry. She grabbed the bread and ravenously stuffed it into her mouth.

"Don't give it to dead people!" she cried. "They can't eat! Give it to me! I'm hungry. I can eat it."

The angry and scandalized old medicine woman took her back to her parents and she was in disgrace for a long time thereafter. The little old woman laughed merrily when she told me the story.

All the Indians believed in a Supreme Being for whom the various tribes had different names, and which they were reluctant to mention before strangers, especially white people. They had a firm belief in a hereafter and in the reward of virtue after death—according, naturally, to their own conception of virtue.

Our old Jack, mentioned before in these articles, once said something about the devil.

"You don't believe in the devil, do you, Jack?" I asked. "There isn't any real devil."

"Oh, yes, you no savvy!" he ex-

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claimed, pitying my lack of information. "I see 'em devil myself."

"Where?"

"My *campoodie.*"

"What did he look like?"

"Can't see 'em good. Pretty near dark. I go home from work. Devil all wrapped up in blanket. He got horns all right."

"What did you do?"

"Get Injun doctor drive 'em away."

"How much you give Injun doctor?"

He mentioned a fee whose amount I have forgotten. It was plenty, however!

"Uh-huh!" I said. "That Injun doctor knew how foolish you were. You can't see very well anyhow, and he dressed up when it was almost dark. He put an old steer head with horns on his head and made you think he was the devil. Then he made you pay him to drive the devil away! All bunk. I'm ashamed of you, Jack!"

Jack shook his head somewhat doubtfully.

"Maybe so. I see 'em!" he said.

On another occasion he averred solemnly that he had *seen* an "Injun doctor" take a rattlesnake, and a coyote, and several other parasites—their spirits, of course—from the chest and stomach of a sick man. Other Indians have reported practically the same facts. These were truthful, dependable Indians. I have often wondered if the medicine man had not hypnotized them and induced them to think they saw what they reported. Hypnotism was undoubtedly practiced by their conjurers.

SIGNIFICANT NAMES

THE picturesque names of Indians lend an additional enchantment to scenes that commemorate them, and in Canada there are numerous geographical features which bear the names of former chiefs. A very appropriate one is that of the Petawawa River in Ontario. The name Petawawa means "the sound is coming," or "the approaching sound," and the region of the chief's hunting exploits has been named after him. Nicola Lake also perpetuates the memory of an Indian chief, whose other name, Nwistermeekin, while it vividly suggests a German fairy tale, really means "walking grizzly bear" and is said to well characterize its owner.

SHALE FOR ROADS

THE State highway department of Missouri has been for some time past making experiments with a view to using as a substitute for gravel on the roads material from coal slack piles. It appears that slack has been used to good advantage instead of gravel in many places, especially for the secondary roads. In Iowa, for example, this material, which is there called mining shale, has been used for several years and has stood the test well. It is also much less expensive than gravel. Mining operations have been going on in Macon County, Missouri, for more than fifty years and there are huge slack piles all about the colleries there. This is the material which it is proposed to substitute for gravel. Burned shale and other substance from the slack piles costs about two dollars less per yard, laid, than gravel. It would, therefore, be a measure of economy to adopt its use.

Shale is defined as clay, or argillaceous material, which has a fissile structure, or which splits readily into thin leaves. It differs from slate in being decidedly less firmly consolidated and its structure is parallel to its stratification.

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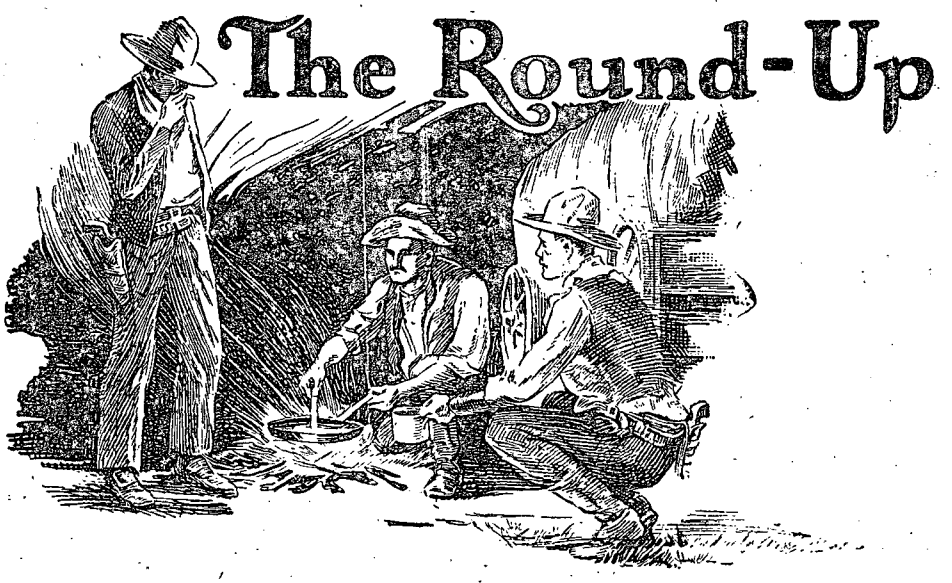

THOUGH now living at Hudson View Gardens, New York, N. Y., J. W. Noel says he'll soon be getting back West. He's got some kind things, and some very appreciative ones, to say about your magazine and his:

"BOSS AND FOLKS: Some years ago, I had a very nice little circulating library, out in Montana, at a Y. M. C. A., and nearly all my readers—mining people and Western men and women—demanded WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, before any of the others that I carried.

"A few months ago, you published 'Man Sized,' by Kenneth Gilbert. It was the finest story of its kind that I have ever read, and many of my friends have spoken particularly of its merit. The nature of the story was so different from the ordinary run of stories that my interest was held from the first line to the very last word. Can't we have some more, Gilbert?

"I was born and raised in the great West, so naturally WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE appeals to me, because of the worth of its stories of that country and its sports.

"I shall soon return to that colorful Pacific coast, but no matter where I am, I shall always enjoy WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

"Every good wish for all your story books. The call is always for more."

Now there slips into the saddle, John Firth, R. F. D. 2, Victor, Montana:

"BOSS AND FOLKS: Being one of the old-timers in Montana, I am going to take Howard J. Perry's side, as far as logging operations go. I am speaking from forty years of experience. I am, and have been a camp blacksmith for more than forty years, and I say that the various kinds of camps have different ways of calling out the men in the morning.

"If the camp is running a mill as well as doing its own logging, the bullcook is awakened by the night watchman. He keeps up steam in the boiler, sweeps out the mill, and blows the whistle one hour before breakfast to call all hands out. When it is ready, the cook's flunky rings the triangle. The men are not supposed to do any talking at the table; only to ask for the things they want to eat. At nine o'clock in the evening they are suppose to, and do, go to bed. The

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bullcook then blows out the light. This is to keep the gamblers from playing cards.

"In early days they logged with logging trucks and bog sleighs. Now it is mostly done with tractors. The trees are cut down and dragged to the logging chutes where they are swamped and cut in different-length logs. They are then rolled in the chutes and sent down to the mill pond. When they log and have no mill they deliver the logs to the logging spur of a railroad, where they are hauled to the mill pond.

"So you see that different camps have different ways.

"I am seventy-seven years old and I am a booster for Mr. Howard J. Perry. His stories are fine. Give us some more of them."

A lady, Mrs. E. Wilson, Inyokern, California, says:

"BOSS AND FOLKS: Will you allow a young woman from the Golden West to say a few words at this time?

"Living out here in the wide-open spaces, I know something of Western life. I have been a constant reader and subscriber to WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE for a number of months, and I want to tell you how much I like your stories. The majority of them are so clean, and true to Western life; free from too much bloodshed and blood-curdling action. Such may be all right for men to read, but I am sure that most men, and no woman or girl would be enthusiastic about a story that contains so much bloodshed.

"I am a great lover of horses, having been born and raised on a large farm in England. I came to the Golden West in my childhood. I am strongly opposed to cruel and abusive treatment of a horse. In my estimation, a horse is inclined to be half human, and with kind treatment, and training, it will do all that one asks of it.

"However, like human beings, there are stubborn and balky horses, but most of this is due to lack of kindness, good training, and breaking, when a colt. I write from experience. Even the wildest and most stubborn horse will respond to kindness. Personally, I object to the use of a cruel whip or quirt, especially when used on a horse for doing something for which he is not responsible.

"I know of a man who illtreated a horse, because he thought the animal was stubborn and balky. Upon investigation, it was found that the collar was a misfit, and that it worked out of place, thus shutting off any means of respiration. Yet all the while the horse was valiantly trying to do its share of pulling with the rest of the team. The animal was not in the least stubborn or balky, but a very willing worker, if it only had a chance. Such men, if willing to exercise a little patience, kindness, and time, would be more than repaid. Abusing a horse for something which it cannot help is stupid and unfair. However, I am not shielding the members of my own sex in this matter, for I have known some of them to be equally as guilty.

"Nevertheless, any man who would deliberately illtreat, or abuse a horse in any manner or form, could never expect to win the respect, confidence and admiration of any real girl or woman. I should like to hear from any of the folks who have any comments to make concerning this matter."

Some wise Western lore will now be handed out by William C. Willsay, 1508 North Boston Place, Tulsa, Oklahoma:

"The efficiency of the following method of picketing horses in a dry and sandy soil is worth knowing.

"Simply tie to the end of the rope some article at least six inches long; anything will do—a stick, a stone, et

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cetera. Plant this from one to three feet in the sand.

"If it is buried one foot deep in ordinary dry and sandy soil, it will require a strain of about twenty-five pounds to draw it up. If buried two feet deep, it will require a force of more than eighty pounds, and if three feet deep, five hundred pounds.

"A rope attached to several of these planted ropes, and resting on the ground, will form a good picket line.

"There is no truth to the old saying that snakes will not pass over manila or horsehair ropes laid on the ground.

"There is no such thing as a 'hoop snake.'

"The snake that's supposed to fall to pieces when molested or touched and then join itself together again—the jointed snake—never lived except in imagination.

"Porcupines don't shoot their quills at an intruder, but sometimes they raise their quills so quickly and shake themselves so vigorously that loose quills fall out and fly a short distance.

"Rattlesnakes don't always rattle a warning before they strike. Especially is this so at shedding time, when they are wholly or partially blind."

Here is appreciation from one who also volunteers to give information as to his section of the country to those who desire it. W. M. Deane, Ward 9S, Kaukakee State Hospital, Kaukakee, Illinois, takes the saddle:

"Boss of the Round-up: Having read a copy of Western Story Magazine, I was very much interested in 'Vengeance Trail,' by Howard E. Morgan. Before coming here, I was a resident of the Pas or Le Pas Mission, Saskatchewan, Canada, and was acquainted with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In the Canadian West I have an acquaintance that reaches from Montreal to Edmonton, and on to Dunvegan and Fort George along the Canadian Norther, C. P. R., and C. National Railways.

"If there is any information required just address me."

Come on boys! Let's have a little song. All ready? Go!

I'M A POOR LONESOME COWBOY

I ain't got no father,
I ain't got no father,
I ain't got no father,
To buy the clothes I wear.

I'm a poor lonesome cowboy,
I'm a poor lonesome cowboy,
I'm a poor lonesome cowboy,
And a long ways from home.

I ain't got no mother,
I ain't got no mother,
I ain't got no mother,
To mend the clothes I wear.

I ain't got no sister,
I ain't got no sister,
I ain't got no sister,
To go and play with me.

I ain't got no brother,
I ain't got no brother,
I ain't got no brother,
To drive the steers with me.

I ain't got no sweetheart,
I ain't got no sweetheart,
I ain't got no sweetheart,
To sit and talk to me.

I'm a poor lonesome cowboy,
I'm a poor lonesome cowboy,
I'm a poor lonesome cowboy,
And a long ways from home.

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Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rivers will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree.

Address: Helen Rivers, care The Hollow Tree, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

ABOVE the Swan Valley and the Chokecherry country are the Mud Lake lands of eastern Idaho. The Mud Lake lands were the old hunting grounds of the redmen and the range of the buffalo herds.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: Between Idaho Falls and the butte country of Montana are the Mud Lake lands of eastern Idaho. Mud Lake, the old stomping grounds of the Indians and the buffalo herds, is at the northern end of the Mud Lake country. Our ranch is a ten-mile trek from the lake. And you can bet we are deserted here, folks, so you needn't wonder we get lonesome once in a while. There are very few folks here at the lake, and whenever we want to see some people we have to trek about forty-five miles. To-night dad and myself are the only ones left here. The other folks have gone to a social forty-five miles away.

There are a lot of legends about the Mud Lake country, and some of them are breathtaking. This country has but few Indians now, and the buffalo have been killed off; but there is a story for every arrowhead found at the lake, and there are many!

I hope the girls will write to me *muy pronto*, or sooner!

MARTHA BROWNING.

Hamer, Idaho.

Prospectors.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: My wife and I are old-time prospectors. I have had thirty-one years of placer prospecting, including diggings in almost every part of the globe. Yes, Alaska to Mexico, and in Australia, South Africa, South America, Philippines, and Borneo. Here in the States I have done placer mining in lower California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada. I know every side of the placer-mining game—wet or dry. At present, I am dry washing. I have claims of my own and a mighty good outfit. And that outfit includes two new power dry-washers run by gasoline, a small hand dry-washer for preliminary dry washing and tracing gold, and numerous pans of various sizes for gold panning. Yes, we have a four-wheel house trailer, too.

Now we need a good pardner, but he must have a pretty good grubstake to match our outfit, folks. Let's hear from you hombres who are interested in placer mining.

HENRY B.

Care of The Tree.

Comanche Dan.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: If you-all think this hombre doesn't know about your West, you have another guess a-coming. Yes, I have "Buffalo Bill's" photo, given to me by himself, and I was friendly with the famous trick shot, "Comanche Dan." I guess that

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is enough to elect me to the hall of fame, eh what? As for myself, I've rambled considerably, especially in India and Africa. Have served in Malta, Egypt, India, Ceylon, South Africa, and shared in five campaigns in these countries. I was in Ceylon when your troops were en route to the Philippines in 1899. Also served in the Great War as artilleryman and Highlander, and met some of your men when serving in a South African contingent there in France. So, you see, I have more than a few links with your country. Served in the South African war, and also served on mounted police in South Africa in the years between the Boer War and the Great War. Yes, I have seen a bit of the world.

Folks, here's hoping I may hear from some old-timer who has a spare quarter of an hour.

J. MONTAGUE.

Cartrel, Hagley Road, Stonebridge, England.

Old-time trapper.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: Get kinda lonesome sometimes with just my guns and traps to think about, and sure would like to have some of the young folks send a flock of questions my way to kind of give me a new interest. I have hunted and trapped in the United States, Canada, and old Mexico. I know the game, and am willing to pass it along; but I especially want letters from young folks who are interested in the big outdoors and wild life. Now, folks, let's see if you-all can't make it worth my while to take a little *pasear* over to the old mail box.

LEON WINGET.

R. F. D., Buyck, Minnesota.

Home seekers.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: My wife and I are coming to the States in the near future and intend to go down South. We wish to settle on a small ranch or farm near a city, where the climate is fairly warm all the year round and where there is something of the wild life still left in the surrounding country. We are wondering which would be the best State to try in, and thought some of you folks might be able to advise us. We are both young, and I am an experienced rancher. We would like to start a place that could be made to pay, or to work on a ranch for some one else until we can pick a spot for ourselves. We intend to camp all the way down from British Columbia. In fact, we will camp until we get settled. We would like best to find a spot that has not been "ground by the wheels of industry and invention." Westerners and Southwesterners, let's hear from you.

FRANK B.

Care of The Tree.

Buffalo herds have stomped the ground around Mud Lake, the old hunting grounds of the redskins of Idaho. Wear your friend-maker badges, folks, and listen to the yarns that the folks from the Mud Lake country can tell you.

Twenty-five cents in coin or stamps sent to the Hollow Tree Department, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, will bring you either the pin style or the button for the coat lapel. In ordering, be sure to state which you wish.

Rambler of the far-off places.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I would like to add my bit of information concerning various sections of this old globe of ours, if it would interest any of the old Holla pals. Being somewhat of a rambler, I have seen most of the West and Southwest of our own good old United States, and have ventured abroad as far as Hawaii, Guam, China, and Japan. I've been up into Canada and down into old Mexico, and have taken a look at the Canal Zone and West Indies. I have many snaps of different places, as well as poems that I've picked up here and there. And I'll be glad to give any information that I can on any of these places.

C. S. HARRINGTON.

R. F. D. 1, Moundville, Missouri.

The old Fox River Trail.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: This is the Fox River Valley of Illinois, and the old Fox River Trail is one of the three highways through the town of Elgin. We have quite a bit of fishing and hunting and trapping in the Fox River Valley here, and in the winter ski jumping is our leading sport. The valley is very beautiful almost any time of the year, and there is no trail more lovely than the old Fox River Trail that goes right through Illinois.

Some time before long we intend to pull up stakes and drift back West, where we have holdings down in Billings, Montana. And in

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the meantime we'd like to exchange a few yarns and some snaps with the folks.

GEORGE P. DILWORTH.
JOHN C. LOSSAN.
750 South State Street, Elgin, Illinois.

"Call all hands, Miss Rivers. Who, of where, has snapshots of what? I'll send Alaskan pictures or curios to any one who will write. And every letter will be answered. I hope you'll stir up the folks, Miss Rivers, here and abroad! I sure want letters from everybody, and that includes the railroad men, too. I would like some pictures of engines from them. I myself have plenty of curios, snaps, and ink. So, everybody, get busy." This new member is W. C. Cralle, S. S. *Alaska*, Ketchikan, Alaska.

"I live in the southern section of Minnesota, folks, but can tell you a great deal about the land of ten thousand lakes. When traveling in northern Minnesota one is rarely far from sight of one of these beautiful lakes, surrounded by magnificent pines. And the lakes and forests abound in fish and game. I am twenty, folks, and would like to hear from any one interested in this State," says Oliver Thom. His address is Owatonna, Minnesota.

"May I join your circle in the quest of pals? Thanks. I can tell some about the 101 Ranch at Marland, Oklahoma, and I can tell a little about California," says Bob Fitzsimmon. Address Box 3081, San Francisco, California.

"I wonder if the folks of the Hollow Tree could make a little room for a Canadian girl who would like very much to gain a lot of pen friends? My pal and I plan to take a long trip this summer, and we would like to say 'Hello' to Hollow Tree friends who live in the places we aim to visit. Our first stopping place will be Calgary, then Banff, and then Vancouver. Then we are going down to Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. On our way back home, we are going to trek through Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, and then up to our home in Saskatchewan. All information concerning interesting places to visit will be appreciated," says Miss Saskatchewan, care of The Tree.

"Louisiana is my native State, and my home town is New Orleans. I know that section of the Gulf coast from A to Z, folks, and any requests for information will be cheerfully answered. In the West, I have been in Colorado, New Mexico, and over most of Texas. I hope, some time in the near future, to visit every State between the Rockies and the Pacific. And I will want a pal to trek along with me —a four-square hombre who will go fifty-fifty in everything. In the meantime, I would like to hear from all of you folks in the Western States who can tell a young man who has a little grubstake just what the chances are of getting started in life out there. I am twenty-four and a radio operator on the steamship *West Celeron*." This hombre is A. H. Monroe, 835 Lawrence Street, Algiers, New Orleans, Louisiana.

"I am a lonesome Scotch hombre, born in old Mexico, and there is a lot about that country that I can tell you of. I know southern California like a book, too, for I have lived here for more than twenty-five years. Well, folks, just let a few of your letters drift over southern California way." Address your letters to R. Alexander, Route 5, Box 521, Venice, California.

"I am a young country school-teacher who would like to find a school in some Western or Southern State. Perhaps some of you folks can give me a hint about school conditions in the South and West? And I would certainly appreciate getting friendly letters, says Laura Hubbard. Address her in care of Bert Stearns, Redwood, New York.

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WHERE TO GO AND HOW TO GET THERE

by John North

We aim in this department to give practical help to readers. The service offered includes accurate information about the West, its ranches, mines, homestead lands, mountains and plains, as well as the facts about any feature of Western life. We will tell you also how to reach the particular place in which you are interested. Don't hesitate to write to us, for we are always glad to assist you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

HERE'S a hombre who is calling us to account for our neglect of winter sports and recreation in the West. "You've had much to say in your department, Mr. North, concerning summer vacations, but I haven't seen anything at all about cold-weather sports," writes Carl H., of Reading, Pennsylvania. "Doubtless there are many of your readers who, like myself, are interested in the outdoor West in the good old wintertime. I'm a devotee of skiing and have been told that this sport may be enjoyed in the Wasatch Mountains. As I expect to be out that way during the winter, I'd like you to tell me where in that section I'll find good skiing. Tell me also about the American Dog Derby that is held annually in Ashton, Idaho."

We are mighty glad that Carl has brought up this topic for discussion, for while the outdoor West is usually considered as a playground for summer outings, it should not be thought that winter out there is a time of chill and gloom. The sincere lover of the out-of-doors will find plenty of sport during this season, as there are many spots well adapted to skiing and snowshoeing. Whoever told Carl about the sport to be had in the Wasatch Mountains certainly knew his West, for such resorts as Pinecrest Inn in Emigration Canyon and Brighton in Big Cottonwood are veritable winter paradises when covered in their snowy mantles.

If Carl is looking for an ideal winter ski hike, he will find that to Brighton, the delightful summer resort at the head of Big Cottonwood Canyon, twenty-eight miles southeast of Salt Lake City, hard to beat. Commencing at Park City, the famous old silver mining camp, the trail leads over a high mountain pass at the head of Thayne's Canyon, where one obtains a rare view of the peaks and canyons in the heart of the mighty

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Wasatch Mountains. Then comes an honest-to-goodness thrill when the remaining distance down the mountainside to Brighton is traversed with dazzling swiftness on the crusted snow. This resort in its winter dress is full of charm, and the return trip down Big Cottonwood Canyon is a memorable one.

One of the most interesting winter events in the West is the annual Dog Derby, held each February at Ashton, Idaho, located on the Yellowstone branch of the Union Pacific system. The team runs over a twenty-five-mile course. If Carl is a dog-racing fan, we predict that he has much joy coming to him when he takes in this event for the first time.

And that is exactly what is in store for Fred M., of Atlanta, Georgia, when he first witnesses some of the Indian ceremonials of the Southwest, about which he is seeking information. "I'm planning to take a motor trip through New Mexico and Arizona some time in the near future, Mr. North, and am especially anxious to take in some of the Indian ceremonials. Can you tell me what tribes live in these States, and something about their dances, and when they occur?"

In touring through New Mexico and Arizona, Fred will find tens of thousands of Indians of many tribes. These tribes are of different stocks, and live under a wide variety of conditions. For instance, there are the Apaches, who live in tepees; the Havasupais and Navajos, who live in hogans; and the Pueblos, who have always dwelt in picturesque adobe towns. All these tribes have their own dances, deeply impressive ceremonies for the most part, that are the symbolic expression of the religion of a primitive people. Colorful and varied, these dances of the Indians of the Southwest are perhaps unsurpassed by the aboriginal ceremonials of any country.

We are sorry to tell Fred that comparatively few of these ceremonial dances occur on fixed dates. Those that do are bound up with Christian observances, such as the celebration of the day of the patron saint of each Pueblo village. Other dances are seasonal, with the exact date dependent upon the phase of the moon or some such natural factor, announced shortly beforehand. The Dance of the Sword Swallowers at Zuni takes place in January, while the Snake Dance of the Hopis occurs during the latter part of August. However, Fred may be consoled by the fact that there are so many of these dances that whatever the season of his visit to the Southwest, he will surely see one or more of these ceremonials.

Speaking of the sights of the West reminds us that a certain citizen of the Gem State is generously offering some information about the scenic beauties and opportunities of an Idaho town.

"In perusing the pages of your most valued WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, Mr. North, I note that Bill D., of Duluth, Minneapolis, and F. K. O., of Lincoln, Nebraska, are looking for a place where there are plenty of scenic attractions in addition to business opportunities. Without doubt, we have such a combination here in Buhl," writes J. F. B.

SPECIAL NOTICE

Mining in British Columbia

is a regular he-man's job, and all the hombres who are thinking of trekking up that way can get the real facts by writing to Mine Mike, in care of this magazine.

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"In case your readers are not familiar with this part of the world, I'll say that Buhl is situated 150 miles west of Pocatello, Idaho. Buhl is easy to get to, for it is on the Old Oregon Trail, Samson Trail, Evergreen Highway, U. S. 30, and eleven miles off the Park to Park Highway. It is also the terminus of the Twin Falls branch of the O. S. L. Railroad.

"Buhl is situated in the center of the Twin Falls Irrigation Project, which is considered one of the best in the United States. From Buhl are shipped trainloads of honey, beans, barley, oats, wheat, prunes, peaches, apples, cherries, hogs, cattle, wool, poultry, eggs, the world-famous Idaho potatoes, dairy products, alfalfa, clover, hay, and seed, head lettuce, grapes, garden truck of all kinds.

"The scenic beauties are many and varied. Within seven miles is Augur Falls. Niagara Falls, Crystal Springs, Clear Lake, the Devil's Washboard, and Thousand Springs are all on the Snake River. Near here are the Shoshone Falls, Ice Cave, Galena Summit, while Lost River and Red Fish Lake are streams abounding in trout and other fish. There are also two private trout hatcheries near here.

"Buhl has banks, stores, several going industries, fine schools, and a splendid farming country adjacent. It also has a hospitable spirit, and we invite all WESTERN STORY readers to come to Buhl, camp in our park, and enjoy our scenery."

That's fair enough. And so seem the prospects up in a certain section of British Columbia in which Sam D., of Washington, D. C., is interested.

"What can you tell me about the Columbia Kootenay Valley, Mr. North?" queries this Washingtonian. "I'd like to know its exact location, how large it is, how it is watered, and what the land is good for. Is it farming country or is it suitable only for pasture? What about scenery, hunting, and fishing? Are the roads passable? How is the climate? Well, as you can see, I want all the facts you can hand out and will be very grateful to you for giving me the straight goods about this entire section."

We are mighty glad to oblige Sam. The Columbia Kootenay Valley lies between the Rocky Mountains and the Selkirks, which vary from 5,000 to 12,000 feet in height, and extends from the junction of the Columbia and Canoe Rivers to the United States boundary at Tobacco Plains. Narrow at the north, it maintains from Golden southward a width of from two to twelve miles. The valley is watered by the Columbia and Kootenay Rivers as well as other streams.

Sam will find that the valley has an area of about one million acres, of which twenty to thirty per cent is available for cultivation, while nearly all the rest is good for pasture. On the bottom lands there is rich alluvial soil. On the benches there is siltlike sandy loam, which generally requires irrigation. The scenery is wonderful, and attracts tourists from all over the world. Big and small game and fish are plentiful. A wagon road suitable for motoring runs from Golden to Fort Steele, whence branches lead to Cranbrook and the United States boundary at Tobacco Plains. From Windermere a motor road to Banff has been completed. The Kootenay Central Railway has opened for settlement the land north of Cranbrook.

It's a mighty interesting section and we'd like to say more about it had we the space. Realizing that the prospective settler always likes to see literature about the section in which he is interested, we are telling Sam where he can procure an illustrated bulletin of the Columbia Kootenay Valley. We shall be glad to send the same address to any other hombres who want it.

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MISSING

This department conducted in duplicate in DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. Because "copy" for a magazine must go to the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

Address all communications to Missing Department, WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

CLERICI, JOSEPH.—Your brother, John, has passed away. Important that you communicate at once with your sister-in-law, Mary Clerici, 2707 Morris Avenue, Bronx, New York.

LASON, FISHER or **SHULTZ.**—Twenty-eight years old. Four feet ten inches tall, brown eyes and hair. Left San Antonio, Texas, for Houston, Texas, in 1925. Last heard from in Houston, Texas, about two years ago. Information appreciated by her children, Ruby, Lois and Charles, care of this magazine.

ATKINS, BEN F.—Last heard from in Lansing, Arkansas, last year. Please write to H. Moore, Crawfordsville, Arkansas.

JAMES, MRS. JANIE.—Last heard from in Memphis, Tennessee. Information appreciated by Mrs. Lizzie Farmer, Stover, Mississippi.

ROSS, JOE.—Last heard from in Little Rock, Arkansas. Please write to Miss L. L. M., care of this magazine.

BAKER.—My father, Edward Baker, had two sisters, who were last heard from in New York City, thirty years ago. At that time he lived in Warrington, Lancashire, England. He has been dead some time, and I would like to get in touch with my aunts. Information appreciated by Niece, care of this magazine.

ROGERS, MICHAEL J., JR.—Was in the hospital department of some army camp in Vermont. Information appreciated by Lillian Manford, R. R. 13, Box 157, Indianapolis, Indiana.

ZEARFOSS, ROSS.—At one time lived in Rockwood, Pennsylvania. Information appreciated by Samuel J. White, Barrack 14, National Military Home, Kansas.

LEIDER, ALBERT.—Worked in the railroad pump house at Rockwood, Pennsylvania. Information appreciated by Samuel J. White, Barrack 14, National Military Home, Kansas.

FRENCHY B.—Remember the electric lights on C Street, in Wenatchie, in 1928? The little devil in the moonlight? Please write to N., Box 163, Carlton, Washington.

YOCKEY, HENRY WASSON.—My uncle. Left Douglas County, Washington, twenty years ago. Information appreciated by his niece, N., Box 163, Carlton, Washington.

COLGIN, MEDIA or **DOVIE.**—Daughter of Frank and Melvinia Colgin. Last heard from in Newark, Ohio, in 1894. Information appreciated by her sister, Maude Colgin Kerr, 922½ North High Street, Columbia, Ohio.

CODY, ROYAL JAMES.—Last seen in 1926, in Toronto, Canada. Black hair, black eyes, and olive complexion. About six feet tall and weighs one hundred and seventy pounds. Information appreciated by Margaret and Minnie, care of this magazine.

BEARDON, JOHN WESLEY.—Forty years old. Black hair and dark complexion. Married Rosa Scott, at Jackson, Tennessee, in 1907. Last heard from in Hammond, Indiana, ten years ago where he was working for the New York Central Railroad. Believed to be in Portland, Oregon. Information appreciated by his son, Leonard Dee Beardon, Box 194, Bemis, Tennessee.

SCOTT, LIZZIE MAY.—Information appreciated by her sister, Mrs. Alice Scott Hawkins, Route 2, Jackson, Michigan.

JONES, or **LONG, RALPH ERNEST,** and **HUGH DORSEY.**—Their stepfather was a dentist named Long, who practiced in Columbus, Georgia. Ralph is about twenty-eight years old, has greenish eyes and sandy hair. Dorsey is seventeen years old. Information appreciated by an old friend, Mrs. G., 323 Battle Ground Avenue, Greenboro, North Carolina.

JOHNSON, LENA MAY.—Twenty-eight years old. Brown hair and eyes. Last heard from in Nashville, Tennessee, about twenty years ago. Her mother's name was Lena May Porter. Information appreciated by her cousin, Mrs. G., 323 Battle Ground Avenue, Greenboro, North Carolina.

VAUGHN, MRS. J. D.—My stepmother. Last heard from in Wilburton, Oklahoma. Information appreciated by Tommie Vaughn, Box 202, Booker, Texas.

ADAMS, RUBY.—Lived in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1922. Last heard from in Fresno, California. Information appreciated by O. Burke, Wilson Hotel, Salt Lake City, Utah.

DAY, FRANCIS SAMUEL.—Formerly of Braunton, Devon, England. Last known address was 4810 Cottage Grove Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Please write to Pitts-Tuckers, Solicitors, Barnstaple, Devon, England.

LABAW, CHARLES L.—Was a radio operator on board the U. S. S. "Nevada," in 1928. Term expired May 19, 1929. Last heard from in Richmond, Virginia, in the summer of 1929. Information appreciated by his brother, "Happy" Labaw, 627 Commerce Avenue, Longview, Washington.

TRAY, or **TRAYSAC, EMMILLE A.**—Last heard from in southern California in the summer of 1929. Remember your buddy, who went with you to North Dakota in 1928? Please write to "Happy" Labaw, 627 Commerce Avenue, Longview, Washington.

WEEKS, JAMES TOWNSEND.—Born in Coshocton County, Ohio, about 1860. Last heard from in Needles, California, in 1906. Information appreciated by his son, James H. Weeks, 373 Sibley Street, Hammond, Indiana.

KIRKPATRICK, CLARENCE and **WILLIE.**—Last heard from in Wyoming, twenty years ago. Please write to D. K., care of this magazine.

GRISCOT, HELEN.—Please write to a lonesome soldier, Harry Isabrant, Nineteenth Infantry, Company E, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

BEAN, LYDIA.—Thirty-eight years old. Dark hair and blue eyes. Was in Datil, New Mexico, in 1927. Believed to have come from Pennsylvania. Maiden name was Lewis. Information appreciated by Bessie Weston, Route 3, Shamrock, Texas.

DUNNETT, FRED, and son, **ARTHUR.**—Last heard from in Canada, about fifteen years ago. Information appreciated by Irene Dunnett Dickson, 509 Rennie Street, Rock Springs, Wyoming.

JOHNSON, MRS. MAY.—Sister of the late F. R. Conklin, of Richmond, Virginia. Last heard from in Pennsylvania. Information appreciated by Arthur, care of this magazine.

DUGAN, GEORGE.—Last heard from in Long Beach, California. Information appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Pearl Bates, Wendling, Oregon.

CLEM, LOUIS.—My father. Separated from my mother, at Pittsburg, Kansas, eleven years ago. Formerly of Oiwa. Information appreciated by Loretta Clem, 2247 Champa Street, Denver, Colorado.

The consular office of a foreign government, situated in New York, is trying to get in touch with the following people, for various reasons: **COONEY, PETER.**—Native of Liverpool, England; last known address was 769 East One Hundred and Fifty-sixth Street, New York City. **MURPHY, ARTHUR.**—Native of England; fireman; has a scar over one eye and the top off of middle fingers; Nellie tattooed on right arm. **BECKFORD, JOSEPH.**—Native of Christobal; last known address was 39 West Ninety-ninth Street, New York City. **McWHIRTER, JOHN.**—A sailor. **LARKIN, R.**—Native of London, England; recently at the Hotel Harding, 412 Greenwich Street, New York City. **TAYLOR, MARY.**—Native of Antigua; last address was 2468 Seventh Avenue, New York City. **HURLEY, JOHN.**—Native of London, England; last address was 25 South Street, New York City. **O'DEA, JOHN.**—Native of Liverpool, England; late of 28 West Thirteenth Street, New York City. **DOWLING, FRED S.**—Native of England; came to the United States twenty years ago; believed to be in Long Island. **STEVENSON, ROBERT.**—Native of Glasgow, Scotland; lived at 322 Twenty-first Street and 414a Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, New York. **RANNIE, MRS.**—Formerly at 160 Decatur Street, Brooklyn, New York.—**JONES, JOHN JESSE.**—Native of England; recently of 18 West One Hundred and Eighth Street, New York City.—**Information concerning the present address of any of the above should be addressed to Box 2, Station P, New York City.**

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BILLY, HENRY W.—Please write to Doodles, care of this magazine.

CURTIS, DON EDWARD, JR.—Born in Belmond, Iowa. Last heard from in Kearny, Nebraska, in 1905. Forty-two years old. Information appreciated by his brother, W. Walter Curtis, 50 Blankside Avenue, Hillside, New Jersey.

STANFIELD, GLENN HART.—Went to Yale, and was last heard from in New York City, in July, 1929. Believed to have left for Los Angeles, California. Serious news for him. Information appreciated by Henry Hoffman, care of "The Billboard," Chicago, Illinois.

NOTICE.—I was born July 27, 1909, in Ellsworth, Wisconsin, and given my mother's name, Florence Marie Kempe. Was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Beilke. Would like to hear from my people. Information appreciated by Mrs. John R. Epling, Jr., Box 72, Gaston, Oregon.

BERRY, SIDNEY.—Thirty-six years old. Weighs about one hundred and fifty pounds, dark complexion, and has black curly hair. Last heard from in Oakland, California, in April, 1928. An oil worker. Information appreciated by an old friend, Mrs. Ethel Grier, 3649 East Fourteenth Street, Long Beach, California.

ATTENTION.—Would like to hear from any members of the company who left Seattle, Washington, for Camp Lewis, Washington, July 24, 1918. Address George A. Strand, 3708 South Asotin Avenue, Tacoma, Washington.

HARRY.—So worried. The children and I want you and miss you. Please write to Ann, care of this magazine.

PLATT, FRED W.—Last heard from in Oklahoma. Was in the Fourteenth Cavalry, stationed at Fort Wingate, New Mexico. Please write to W. M. G., care of this magazine.

MYERS, MARGARET.—Left Atlanta, Georgia, for Indiana, in August, 1929. Remember the soldier boy on Cone Street? Important. Please write to H. I., care of this magazine.

CLAIBOURNE, B. EVERETT.—Mother is sick and needs you. Please write to your friend, F. W. Tolles, care of this magazine.

COVER, MARSHAL STUART.—A cook. Last heard from in Wisconsin, three years ago. Important. Information appreciated by Mrs. Cover, 595 York Street, St. Paul, Minnesota.

LAWLESS, HARRY.—Twenty-eight years old. Six feet tall, light-brown hair, and brown eyes. Left Springfield, Massachusetts, in October, 1925, with his brother. Last heard from in Lake Side, California, in March, 1927. Information appreciated by an old pal, Paul A. Rohmann, 26 Spring Street, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

POLLIS, PETER.—Formerly of 445 West One Hundred and Forty-fourth Street, New York City. Information appreciated by his wife, Anna, care of this magazine.

BROTHER.—Why treat us so? Position and friends await you. Please write to mother before it is too late, direct or through Sug, care of this magazine.

BETHURAM, LILLIAN.—Formerly of Middlesboro, Kentucky. Daughter of R. M. Fry. Married Mack Bethuram, who died at Kettle Island, Kentucky, in January, 1916. Heard from in Michigan City, Indiana; Chicago, Illinois; and Benton Harbor, Michigan. Your father is dead. Please write to your son, Maxime Bethuram, 119 North Third Street, Richmond, Indiana.

DORNON, JACK.—Last seen March 10, 1930. Formerly of Colorado. Was employed by the Wells Lumber Co., of Iron River, Michigan. Information appreciated by Marie Towler, Box 14, Caspian, Michigan.

BUNCH, ANNA.—A niece of Taylor Langston. Information appreciated by E. W. T., Fancy Prairie, Illinois.

STEVENS, THADDEUS.—Twenty-four years old. Blue eyes and blond hair. Formerly on the U. S. S. "Tampa." Last heard from in Indianapolis, Indiana. It was all a mistake. Please write to Katherine Marie Russo, 761 East Two Hundred and Twenty-second Street, New York City.

MORROW, L. D. SIMPSON.—Last heard from in Detroit, Michigan. Sister is alone and lonely. Please write to Sister L., same place, or care of this magazine.

NOAK, BEN F.—Twenty-five years old. Has gray eyes and brown hair. Last heard from in Shawnee, Oklahoma, where he was working as a brakeman on the Rock Island Railroad, in 1929. Information appreciated by his sister, Mary Ragsdale, 119½ South Main Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

BARTLETT, HARRY G.—Mother is very ill. Important. Please write to your wife, Mae Bartlett, care of Eaton Branch, Watervliet, Michigan.

DeFORE, J. C., or JOE DAVIS.—Twenty-three years old. Five feet eleven inches tall, blond hair, and blue eyes, fair complexion. Last heard from in Detroit, Michigan, at the Astoria Hotel, in 1926. Information appreciated by his mother, Mrs. M. J. DeFore, 1305 Steiner Avenue, Birmingham, Alabama.

MANN.—James C. Mann was a private in Company I, Eleventh Regiment, Pennsylvania Infantry. He enlisted in September, 1864, and was discharged in May, 1865, at Washington, D. C. He was born in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, and married a Miss A. Cramer, just before he enlisted. They had two sons. James was the son of Benjamin Louis and Hannah Mann. He had a brother John, who was killed in the Civil War. Another brother, William, my father, was in the Eighty-fifth Regiment. Sarah Elizabeth, George Louis, Eliza T., and Jonathan were sisters and brothers of James Mann. They were all born in Brownsville, Pennsylvania. James and his first wife were divorced, and he married again. Have important news for his sons. Information appreciated by Nephew, care of this magazine.

WALK, ANNE ELIZABETH; MAHONEY, BALFE; and GATES, TERESA.—Left Indiana several years ago, and were last heard from in Detroit, Michigan. Information appreciated by Mrs. Walk's sister, Mrs. Dipple, 73 Morpeth Street, Bethnal Green, London E. 2, England.

RUTH C.—Formerly of Orlando, Florida, and Greenville, South Carolina. Last heard from when leaving Greenville for Washington, D. C. Please write to your old friend, A. L. S., care of this magazine.

DEANE, CLARENCE.—Forty-five years old. Five feet four inches tall, and has blue eyes. Information appreciated by his wife, Ethel Deane, 310 West Fifth Street, Pawhuska, Oklahoma.

ATTENTION.—Would like to hear from Civil War veterans. I enlisted in the First Missouri Cavalry, Company C, under General Totten, at Springfield, Missouri. Address J. M. Skaggs, Gerty, Oklahoma.

CARTWRIGHT, HURBERT, and DELBERT PERKINS.—Last heard from in El Dorado, Iowa. Information appreciated by Donald L. Hawkins, Battery E, Second Coast Artillery, Fort Sherman, Panama Canal Zone.

PIPENHAGEN, ALBERT.—Sixty-one years old. Five feet six inches tall, fair complexion. A cook. Last heard from in San Francisco, California, about fifteen years ago. Information appreciated by his brother, William Pipenhagen, 1981 St. Anthony Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota.

WILSON, JAMES.—Left Ireland, for America, several years ago. Last heard from in Rhode Island. Information appreciated by his nephew, William J. McCartney, 41 Pernan Street, Belfast, Ireland.

GUSTAVSON, DORIS MITCHELL.—Daughter of Wally Mitchell. Has a son, Buddy. Last heard from in Kansas. Information appreciated by a friend, X. Y. Z., care of this magazine.

CHARLES.—Saw your wife and children. M. is really ill and worrying. We all miss you. It is quite all right for you to write to me. Please write to M. T., care of this magazine.

ATTENTION.—Would like to hear from any one who served with Headquarters Company, 150th F. A., Forty-second Division, during the World War, or from any one who was in Ward 6, Base Hospital 53, at Beamacourt, France, from November, 1918, to March, 1919. Address Lee Curtis, 339 Market Street, Hot Springs, Arkansas.

WAANANEN, BILL.—I still care and would like to hear from you, if you remember. Please write to Salome Bonner, Cathro, Michigan.

BANETTE, CARL, and wife, ALMA.—Need you. Please write to Mrs. Son Watson, Cathro, Michigan.

HANSEN, THOMAS W.—Last heard from in 1922. His address then was 7 Mitzgen Avenue, Detroit, Michigan. Information appreciated by an old friend, Salome Bonner, Cathro, Michigan.

DONDI, GUISEPPE.—A tailor. Seventy years old. Last heard from in New York City. Information appreciated by Baratti Pacifica, 324 South Seventh West Street, Salt Lake City, Utah.

SEELY, GEORGE J.—Last heard from in 1925. I am interested in you and want to see you again. Please write to your old friend, W. P. M., care of this magazine.

MANN, H. S.—I still love you, and want to hear from you. Please write to Florence M., care of this magazine.

CRABTREE, DOCTOR J. S.—Of Ohio or Illinois. Was in Oklahoma from 1889 to 1895. Information appreciated by L. O., care of this magazine.

GASKILL, CHARLES A.—Was in Kingfisher, Oklahoma, from 1889 to 1893. Information appreciated by L. O., care of this magazine.

SULLIVAN, EUGENE J.—A plasterer. Born in Hoosick Falls, New York, in 1882. The son of Eugene and Mary Sullivan. Information appreciated by Eugene Sullivan, Box 414, Checotah, Oklahoma.

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In Next Week's Issue of Western Story Magazine

TROUBLE'S MESSENGER

By George Owen Baxter

The Boss: Who likes Indian yarns?
Western Story Readers: We ALL do!
The Boss: Who writes them best?
Western Story Readers: George Owen Baxter!
The Boss: Here's a new one by Bax——
Western Story Readers: High-yi! Yippy-yippy-yi! Whoopee, whoopee! Yippy-yipyi!
The Boss (smiling, and trying to make himself heard): Let 'er ride!

CALL OF THE TIMBER

By Howard J. Perry

The voice of the woods calls loud, deep, and strong to those who have dwelt therein. It is hard to escape from its magic.

HARDROCK HAS A CHILL

By Seth Ranger

Some of the old-timers got cold feet, but Hardrock got cold all over.

Also Features by

Raymond A. Berry
George Cory Franklin
Kenneth Gilbert
And Others

15c a Copy

At All News Stands

In This Week's Issue of

DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

ONE OF SEVEN

By Judson P. Philips

Fear, jealousy, intrigue, and ambition were just a few of the motives back of this crime.

PASSION'S PRICE

By Paul Ellsworth Triem

Wealth and poverty join hands with disastrous results.

THIS WAY OUT

By Perry J. Carter

Bluster had taken him out of many tight places until at last it got him into one.

Also Features by

Charlotte Dockstader
Bryan Irvine
And Others

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On the Stands Now

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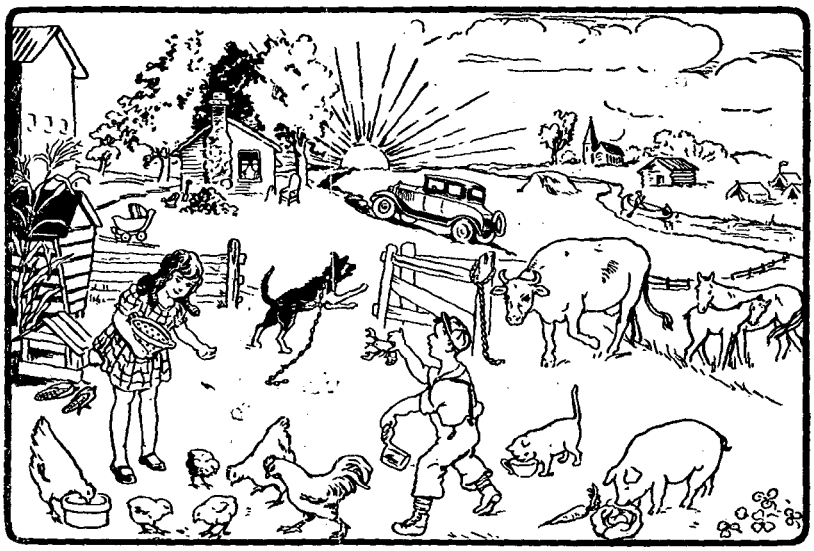
Win a Buick Sedan

or $2,900.00 in Cash

SOMEONE who answers this ad will receive, absolutely free, a fully equipped 7-passenger Buick Sedan or its full value in cash ($2,000.00) and $900.00 in cash for promptness. We are also giving away 6 Three Window Fordor Ford Sedans, an Eastman Home Moving Picture Outfit, a Shetland Pony, a Radio, Gold Watches, Silverware and many other valuable prizes—besides Hundreds of Dollars in Cash to people who solve our puzzle and win our prizes. Already we have given away more than $200,000.00 in cash and prizes to advertise our business. Miss Jewell Casey won $3,720.00, Mr. I. Nystrom won $3,375.00, Miss Anna Linke won $2,320.00, Mr. M. D. Reidman won $3,920.00, Mrs. Robt. Ellington won $1,750.00 and Mr. E. N. Garrett won $2,320.00. More than $7,500.00 in prizes will be awarded in this offer, which is guaranteed by an old reliable company with a reputation of many years of honest dealings and is open to anyone living in the United States outside of Chicago.



Solve This Puzzle

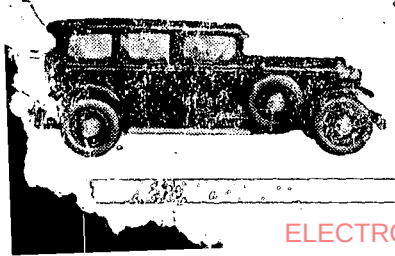
There are many objects in the picture of the barnyard above, such as dog, girl, fence, automobile, rooster, boy, tent, etc. If you can find 5 starting with the letter "C," fill in the coupon below (or write them on a separate sheet of paper) and send it to me at once.

$900.00 Cash Given for Promptness

In addition to the 7-passenger Buick Sedan and 6 Ford Sedans and the many other valuable prizes—besides Hundreds of Dollars in Cash—I am also going to give an extra added Cash prize of $900.00 for Promptness to the winner of the Buick Sedan, making a total of $2,900.00 you may win.

In case of ties duplicate prizes will be awarded, and any winner may have cash instead of the prize won if so preferred. Get busy right away. Find 5 objects starting with the letter "C," fill in the coupon below (or write them on a separate sheet of paper) and send it to me just as soon as possible to qualify for an opportunity to share in the $7,500.00 total grand prizes. EVERYBODY PROFITS. Who knows but that you may be the Lucky First Prize Winner. It pays to act promptly.

Mail Today



Robert Harrison, Mgr., Dept. C-143
315 So. Peoria St., Chicago, Ill.

The objects starting with the letter "C" are: .....

My Name .....

Address .....

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